

"DICK JULIAN'S TRIAL!" An Absorbing Double-Length Story of Tom Merry & Co. BY MARTIN CLIFFORD.

The GEM 2^D

EVERY WEDNESDAY.

LIBRARY
OF
SCHOOL AND SPORTING STORIES



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1924.

FALSELY ACCUSED !

"Kindly leave this study at once, Julian," said Dr. Holmes sternly. with tears as he listened in silence to the Head's scathing words. (A dramatic incident from the grand school story inside.)

"I am ashamed of you!" Dick Julian's eyes filled with tears as he listened in silence to the Head's scathing words. (A dramatic incident from the grand school story inside.)



Address all letters: The Editor, The "Gem" Library, The Fleetway House, Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4. Write me, you can be sure of an answer in return.

MY DEAR CHUMS,—You always know where to find a rousing, cheering, fighting bunch of yarns. The GEM is famed everywhere for its first line, topping stories. The issue of the favourite story paper now in your hands shows you the reason for the world-wide popularity of the weekly which is an unflinching stand-by.

A DOUBLE-LENGTH SCHOOL STORY!

That is the principal item on our programme for next week. Its length will appease the disquietude of those numerous readers who are always afraid the St. Jim's tale should err on the side of brevity.

"THE FOOL OF THE FORM!"

By Martin Clifford.

A new boy, by name Robert Courtneidge, is the central figure in this splendid story which will appear in the GEM for next Wednesday. Courtneidge is inclined to be a wayward youth. Public School life comes very strangely to him, and he does not settle down at all comfortably. For this state of things there is no blame at all to be attached to Tom Merry. The fact is the Shell leader does his very utmost to make smooth the path of the new arrival. Tom Merry has promised Courtneidge's anxious mother that he will look after the fresh fellow. Little did Tom imagine that the task he cheerfully takes on, though he does not care for it, would lead him into such tragic difficulties. Such is the outcome. Tom Merry is a fellow whose word is his bond. Courtneidge is a fair handful. He gets into terrible trouble. But Tom Merry is as true as steel. There is no length to which Tom, acting with a full sense of his responsibilities, will not go.

THE "HOLIDAY ANNUAL."

You will never meet with a better batch of stories of school, sport, and adventure than the fare provided in the new volume of the "Holiday Annual." Some readers tell me they are keeping this magnificent treat for Christmas. Keep it for Christmas by all means, but bespeak a copy right away, or it may be too late. The book is a famous feast of fun, and just the right sort of cheery volume to turn to during the long evenings.

"CHUMS OF THE IRON WAY!"

By Roland Spencer and Francis Warwick.

Next week we hear more of the fight for supremacy between the Great Electric Northern, and the Great Scottish and Central. Jimmy Speed and Sam Blundell are well to the fore. The instalment is full of thrills. It deals with a night of dramatic happenings, a time fraught with peril. You will be fairly swept away with the life and death fight Jimmy puts up on the bridge. He is in the clutches of the worthless scoundrel, Cridland. This is the railway yarn of the year, and of many years. And the most gripping chapters are yet to come!

THOSE BRITISH NAVY PLATES.

You will say "Well done, 'Magnet'!" next week. Our Companion Paper starts next Monday its Grand Free Series of Magnificent Photogravure Plates of the Warships of his Majesty's Navy! Don't miss this splendid gallery of pictures. Number 1 will be given away in the next issue of the "Magnet." These plates are printed on fine art paper, and they show the very latest type of warships in the grand Service which keeps the British Empire tant and strong. I hope all my chums will make sure of this admirable naval picture gallery. The plates will give pleasure for many a year. They are beautifully finished, and will be a credit to any room. Get the set! Frame them! You will have a possession of which you will be proud. Moreover, these fine pictures of the watchdogs of the sea will be reminders of what the gallant Navy did, and what the Navy is always doing for the safety and well-being of those whose work lies inland, in the teeming cities, or the countrysides.

YOUR EDITOR.

"MY READERS' OWN CORNER!"

OUR TUCK HAMPER IS PRIME!

Remember, boys and girls, we award a delicious Tuck Hamper for the best storyette sent us each week—also half-a-crown is paid for each other contribution accepted. Cut out the coupon on this page, and send it, together with your ioke, to me.

TUCK FOR SEVEN KINGS!

"E'S OFF!"

During a recent review, when a certain infantry regiment was marching past the saluting post, the band was playing the regimental march. The colonel, who was a very bad horseman, was having a great deal of trouble in trying to keep on his rearing and plunging steed. The men, as a result of watching their colonel's antics, were marching out of order and crowding together. "Ease off!" cried a sergeant, noticing the disorder. "No 'e ain't," cried a recruit, mistaking the order: "but 'e soon will be!"—A Tuck Hamper, filled with delicious Tuck, has been awarded to A. H. Borissow, 107, Cambridge Road, Seven Kings, Essex.

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 872.

NOT DESPERATE!

A passenger had been abusing the guard for the slow progress of the train. "Look here, sir," cried the exasperated official at last, "if you don't like the speed of this train you can get out and walk!" "Thanks so much," said the passenger, "but to tell you the truth, though I'm short of time, I'm not in such a hurry as all that!"—Half-a-crown has been awarded to John McGeachie, 62, Craigie Street, Crosshill, Glasgow.

REALISTIC!

The young artist was showing his lady friend round the studio. "How very realistic your paintings are!" she cried delightedly. "You think so," murmured the gratified artist. "Why, yes. That one absolutely makes my mouth water." "What!" shrieked the artist. "A sunset makes your mouth water!" "Oh, is it a sunset?" she said sweetly. "I thought it was a fried egg!"—Half-a-crown has been awarded to Bernard Callaghan, The Homestead, Solihull Road, Shirley, near Birmingham.

IN DETAIL!

On a motoring tour, Jenkins pulled up at a very old inn, and ordered something to eat. While he had the meal the proprietor of the inn talked about the legends of the village. "Everything in this place has a story, too," he said. "Well," said Jenkins unkindly, "do please tell me the story of this quaint old ham sandwich!"—Half-a-crown has been awarded to R. A. Pemberton, 19, Artillery Buildings, Artillery Row, Westminster, S.W. 1.

COULDN'T BE DONE!

It was washing-day, and Bobbie had been kept home from school to look after the baby. Mother sent them into the garden to play, but it was not long before cries disturbed her. "Bobbie, what is the matter with baby now?" she inquired from the wash-tub. "I don't know what to do with him, mother," replied Bobbie. "He's dug a hole and wants to bring it indoors!"—Half-a-crown has been awarded to Miss Edith Reynolds, 69, Comyn Road, Clapham Junction, S.W. 11.

A COOL RETORT!

An angler, back from a day's successful fishing, took his little niece on his knee and toddled her up and down. "Do you like riding on my knee?" he asked. "Oh, no, not much," answered the little girl, with a smile. "You see, uncle, I have ridden a real donkey!"—Half-a-crown has been awarded to Miss Florrie Agnew, Clifden, 323, Antrim Road, Belfast.

BRUTE FORCE!

A dear old lady approached the bed where a soldier lay swathed in bandages from head to foot. "Oh, my poor man," she said sympathetically. "Have you been wounded?" "Oh, no, mum!" came the distressed reply. "I've been kicked by a canary!"—Half-a-crown has been awarded to A. Young, 6, Clifton Street, St. Anne's-on-Sea, Lancashire.

TUCK HAMPER COUPON.

THE GEM LIBRARY.

No attempt will be considered unless accompanied by one of these Coupons.

Richard Julian, the Jewish junior in the Fourth Form at St. Jim's, is "up against it." He needs all his courage and fortitude to keep his end up against the universal hostility of his schoolfellows!

DICK JULIAN'S TRIAL!

A Powerful Double-Length
School Story of Tom Merry
& Co., at St. Jim's.

By Famous
Martin Clifford.

CHAPTER 1.

Julian is Tight-Fisted!

"JOLLY good wheeze!" said Tom Merry of the Shell Form at St. Jim's enthusiastically.

"Hear, hear!" said Monty Lowther.

"First chop!" assented Manners. "Most of us are in funds, so we can all stand our whack. I'll put down five bob!"

The Terrible Three of the Shell and a number of other juniors were gathered round the notice-board in the Hall of the School House.

On the board was a paper written in the bold, neat hand of Eric Kildare of the Sixth, captain of St. Jim's.

This is what it said:

"NOTICE.

re the New Zealand Boys' Football Match at Bagshot.

A great deal of interest has been shown at this school, among others, in the forthcoming match at Bagshot between the travelling team of New Zealand boy footballers, and the Southshire Junior F.C. This will be an opportunity not to be missed to see this celebrated boys' team from New Zealand, who are leaving for the North directly after the match. As Bagshot is some distance from St. Jim's, and there are numerous boys in the school unable to bear the expense of a visit in the ordinary way, a fund is being raised for a general school outing to Bagshot by charabanc, tea being provided, boys from every Form being welcome. Subscriptions are required, and it is hoped that boys of the Fourth Form upwards will contribute all they can so that the younger lads of the school may not be precluded from witnessing a match which will undoubtedly be of value from an educational as well as a sporting point of view.

(Signed) ERIC KILDARE."

Jack Blake & Co., of Study No. 6 in the Fourth, strolled along and looked with great interest at the notice.

"Bai Jove! I wegard that as a weally toppin' notion, deah boys!" said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, adjusting his famous monocle and surveying the assembly of juniors. "Jollay thoughtful of Kildare to waise a subscription for a general outin' to the Bagshot match, and tea. It will enable the youngstahs of the Third and others less fortunately placed than ourselves to see the match. It's bound to be worth seein'. Accordin' to all accounts, the New Zealand footballers are goin' gweat guns."

"Yes, rather!"

"It will do the kids in the Third good to see some real football," said Jack Blake. "They never trouble to watch us play, but—"

"Here, mind yourself, Blake!" interposed Wally D'Arcy, the cheery hero of the Third, who had just walked up with

Joe Frayne, Curly Gibson, and Jameson. "When we need tips in the matter of football, we certainly shouldn't think of wasting time looking at you silly jossers!"

Arthur Augustus sniffed.

"Weally, Wally, I wegard your wemarks as most oppwobwious!" he exclaimed. "I am constantly havin' to wepweve you for gwoss diswespect for your elders."

"Elders rats!" sniffed Wally. "I say, kids, that's jolly good of old Kildare to think of us, though. We wouldn't miss seeing the New Zealand team for worlds. We'll subscribe to the fund, of course. I'll start the list for our Form with—lemme see—a tanner!"

"Wally!" gasped Arthur Augustus, in horror.

"What's up, Gus?" said his minor cheerfully, dragging out a stub of pencil from the dim recesses of his pockets, and licking it. "Have you got a pain?"

"Wally, your mannah of speech is appallin'!" exclaimed the swell of the Fourth.

"Go hon!" grinned Wally. "Well, kids, as I was saying when this frabjous chump of a major of mine interrupted—"

"Wally, unless you apologise for that wemark, I shall wegard it my painful duty to administrah a feahful thwashin'!"

"Oh, seat!" said the hero of the Third, quite unperturbed. "Now, I've put down my name for a tanner—"

"Wally, you little wuffian—"

"Oh, sixpence, then, just to please old Gus!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Wally carefully wrote his name down for sixpence on a grubby piece of impot paper, and looked round to his followers for additions to that vast sum. The fag tribe at St. Jim's was never over blessed with wealth, and at present they were on lean times. Joe Frayne contributed twopence, Curly Gibson threepence-halfpenny, and Jameson fourpence and a French halfpenny with a hole in it, which coin was contemptuously refused by Wally.

Tom Merry & Co. looked on in high amusement at Wally's collection.

It was apparent that the fags of the Third would be quite unable to raise the price of one return fare to Bagshot, let alone fares for the whole Form—so that was where Kildare's very thoughtfully raised fund would come in.

"I'll start a contribution list for the Shell and Fourth," said Tom, taking out his notebook. "Here's five bob to start with. Now, Gussy, you ought to stand something handsome. How much?"

"Put me down for ten shillin's, deah boy," said the noble swell of St. Jim's graciously.

"Right-ho! Gussy half a quid!"

"Ten shillin's, deah boy!"

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"Oh, any old thing! Ten bob, then!"

"Weally, Tom Mewvy, I twust—"

"Do dry up, Gussy, there's a good ass!" said Tom cheerfully. "Did you say five bob, Manners? Good! Half-a-crown from you, Monty? And four bob from Blake? That's the stuff! Roll up with your subscriptions, boys! The more the merrier!"

The juniors readily contributed all they could spare towards Kildare's fund. It was universally agreed that it was a good idea, and just like old Kildare.

Tom Merry had quite a useful list by the time he and his chums left the Hall.

They met Aubrey Racke, Gerald Crooke, and Percy Mellish on the stairs.

Racke, the stylish son of a war-time profiteer, was jingling his money in his pockets with an air of great self-satisfaction. Racke was always well supplied with money, and he never failed to let his schoolfellows know it, although he never paraded with much.

"Just the chaps we want to see!" said Tom Merry, halting. "You've heard of Kildare's fund, I suppose?"

"I did see something about it on the board," said Racke, with a yawn. "But that rot is no concern of mine."

"Isn't it?" said Tom warmly. "You've got to contribute!"

"Oh, go and eat coke!" growled Racke.

Crooke and Mellish edged away, but Blake, Herries, and Digby intercepted them.

"Now, then, you chaps, pay up!" said Blake. "It's all for a good cause. Chaps with tin are expected to stand their whack towards the outing to Bagshot next Saturday."

"Why should we contribute?" demanded Racke, with an unpleasant scowl. "We're not going to see the rotten match, and—"

"Smoking and playing nap in the box-room are more your idea of spending a half-holiday, I suppose?" said Tom Merry, with cheery candour. "Well, you can do as you like on Saturday, but we expect you to contribute. Chaps who are too jolly mean to shell out will be bumped—by order!"

Racke & Co. growled and muttered their protests, but Tom Merry won his way.

He extracted two shillings from Racke, and a shilling each from Crooke and Mellish, and then he and the others went onward to seek fresh subscribers.

The junior Common-room was full when they arrived in there. Racke & Co. entered almost behind them.

Kildare's fund was already being discussed, Baggy Trimble having brought in the information concerning the project. Baggy, the Peeping Tom and general news-monger of St. Jim's, made a good publicity man.

"Well, kids, it's up to all of you to stand your share of the general exes!" said Tom Merry, flourishing his notebook. "I'm making up a list to take to Kildare, to show him that we back him up. Did you say ten quid, Kangaroo?"

"Tennence is more my mark!" laughed Harry Noble. "I think I can stretch a point to two bob, anyway!"

"Good man! Now, Baggy, you're standing your whack, of course?"

The plump Fourth-Former shook his head.

"I'm sorry, Tom Merry, but I happen to be absolutely broke," he said. "I'd contribute willingly, of course, but I'm afraid I shall have to claim on the fund instead."

"If you accompany the crowd to Bagshot you'll have to put something towards the outing, even though you can't afford to stand all your expenses," said Tom Merry severely. "Shell out, Baggy!"

"Really, Tom Merry, I'm broke—"

"Bosh!" interrupted Blake. "Why, I saw Langton of the Sixth cash a postal-order for you only this evening, you young duffer!"

"Ahem!" coughed Baggy. "Er—quite so! But it was only for sixpence—"

"Why, you awful little crammer! It was for three-and-six—a tip from an uncle, or an aunt, or somebody!"

"I—I meant to say three-and-sixpence, Blake. I've spent the money, though!"

"Rats! You couldn't have done, Baggy! The tuck-shop's closed, and you've had no chance to spend your filthy lucre! Dole out!"

"I can't!" howled Baggy desperately. "I haven't got any money!"

"We'll soon see!" said Herries grimly. "Turn his pockets out!"

The juniors made a movement towards Baggy, and that youth, with a look of terror, fled round the Common-room.

"Gerraway, you rotters! Ow! I won't have my pockets turned out! Yowp! Hands off, or I— Yah! Wow! Yarooooooogh!"

Bump!

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Baggy landed with a terrific concussion on the floor, with Monty Lowther, Blake, and Digby on top of him.

"Good egg! Hold him down!" chuckled Tom Merry. "We'll soon find out whether he's broke or not!"

"Yarooooogh! Leggo! Yah! Lemmegerrup, you rotters!" bellowed Baggy from the floor. "I'll complain to Mr. Raiton! Yowp! Ow-wow-wow! Help! Thieves! Yow! I'm being robbed! Yooooooop!"

Clunk! Clunk!

Two silver coins rolled out of Baggy's pockets. One was half-a-crown and the other a shilling. Baggy gave a wilder howl when he heard them, and he struggled more desperately than ever when he saw Tom Merry pick them up.

"Bai Jove!" said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "Baggy, you awful little spoofah, you're in funds!"

"Yarooooogh! Thieves! Gimme my money!" wailed Baggy.

"Are you coming to Bagshot with us on Saturday, Baggy?" asked Tom Merry.

"Ow-wowow-wow! Yes! Groogh! I—"

"Then you'll have to contribute half-a-crown towards expenses!"

"I won't! Yah! I'm not going! Gimme back that money!"

"You will go, I know, Baggy, in spite of what you say now," said Tom Merry. "So I'll keep the half-a-crown and return the bob. Here you are!"

"Groogh! Rotter! Thief! I want the half-a-crown as well!"

"You'll have a full half-a-crown's worth on Saturday!" said Blake. "You've been getting too much on the nod lately, Baggy, so it's time you paid—or partly paid—for something!"

"Ow! I've been robbed! Groogh! I want my money! I—"

"You'll get a thick ear if you don't shut up, Baggy!" said Tom Merry, as the others allowed the fat junior to rise to his feet. "I've put you down on the list for half-a-crown, so that's that! Now, then, you other chaps, let's get to business! Pay up all you can afford for the outing on Saturday. All seats on the charabanc free, but all contributions thankfully received. Ten bob, Cardew? Thanks awfully, old chap! And ten from you, Lumley-Lumley? Good egg! Only a bob, Roylance? Never mind, if that's all you can afford. All's grist that comes to the giddy mill!"

There was no lack of support to the general subscription.

Tom Merry went from one to another of all the juniors in the Common-room, a domino-box serving the purpose as a receptacle for the money.

He came at length to Dick Julian, who was seated by the window, his hands thrust deep into his pockets and a frown on his face.

"Pay up!" said Tom peremptorily.

The Jewish junior looked up with a start.

"Eh?" he asked.

Tom rattled the domino-box.

"Pay up!" he said. "We want your contribution!"

"Oh!" said Julian; and he hesitated.

He caught the looks of the other fellows and flushed.

"Nothing too large or too small!" said Tom Merry encouragingly. "All the other fellows have stood their whack, and now it's your turn, Julian. Did you say a quid?"

"No."

The answer came from Julian in a quiet but decisive voice.

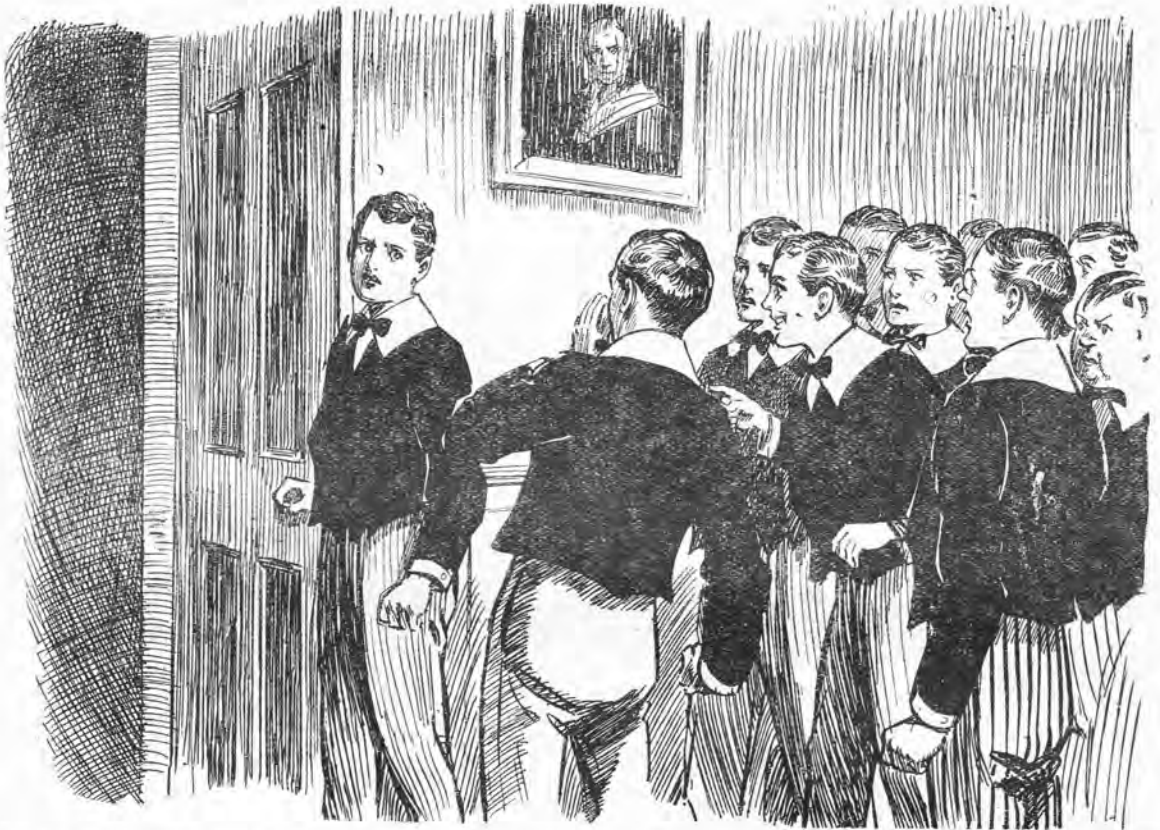
Tom Merry looked quickly at him.

"You needn't go so high unless you care to, Julian," he said. "How much shall I put you down for?"

"Nothing," replied Julian.

The other juniors in the Common-room looked at the Jewish lad in astonishment and wonder.

Dick Julian of the Fourth was a quiet fellow and was generally liked at St. Jim's by juniors and seniors alike. There were one or two—of the Racke and Mellish order—who kept themselves aloof from him, but Julian was on the best of terms with all the boys who mattered at St. Jim's. Perhaps Racke & Co.'s dislike of him was due to the fact that he did not fulfil their highly imaginative expectations of what a Jewish boy should do. Julian had shown none of the unpleasant traits which Racke & Co. claimed to be the characteristics of his race. He had never given anyone cause to accuse him of greed or stinginess, and he did not talk with the rich Hebrew accent which was so peculiar to Mr. Moses, the Wayland moneylender. He was not fat, sleek, or oily. On the contrary, Julian was one of the best athletes of the school, was good-looking and healthy, and he joined in all the sports of the Form and, as a rule, in the various japes and diversions which enlivened existence in the Lower School at St. Jim's.



"I've told you that I'm not going to contribute—and that's flat!" exclaimed Julian. "If any one of you thinks he can extract the money from me by force he's welcome to try!" Dick Julian opened the Common-room door and, with a bitter look at Tom Merry & Co., he strode away down the corridor. Jeers and catcalls followed him from Crooke & Co. (See this page.)

Julian was reputed to be very well off, and he certainly always seemed to be plentifully supplied with cash. He sometimes lent money to the fellows, too, but he never exacted interest, as Racke & Co. would have expected him to do. Julian often lost money on loans to his school-fellows, especially where Baggy Trimble and Mellish were concerned, so that far from getting interest on these loans he did not even obtain the return of his capital. Which was very exasperating to Racke and those other uncharitable youths who tried to make out that Julian was a young Shylock.

The juniors in the Common-room stared hard at Julian's handsome, set face.

It seemed that he tried to avoid their glances, for he cast his eyes down to the floor and remained motionless, his cheeks flushed.

"Julian," said Tom Merry, "you must be joking! Aren't you going to contribute to the fund?"

Dick Julian did not look up even then. He shook his head.

"Bai Jove!" exclaimed D'Arcy. "I am wathah surprised that you should wefuse to stand your share, Julian, deah boy! Pewwaps you haven't the weady cash just now, so if you would like me to advance you—"

"Thanks all the same, D'Arcy, but I won't borrow money from you," said Julian, in a low voice. "I'm not putting my name down to the fund because I—I'm not going to contribute."

"Bai Jove!"

There was a buzz of excited voices in the Common-room.

Tom Merry gave the Jewish lad a peculiar look.

"Look here, Julian, you can't be so hard-up that you can't stand a few bob for the fund," he said a little coldly. "All we ask is what you can conveniently spare. You needn't mind only giving a bob or so, if that's all you can afford. What's it going to be? How much?"

Julian bit his lip and sat still, his eyes remaining down-cast.

"Nothing," he said shortly.

There was a hiss from the juniors in front.

"Yah! Tight-fisted blighter!"

George Gore was the speaker, and Crooke backed him up. "Julian's too mean to contribute even a bob to the fund!" he exclaimed. "But what more can you expect? He's like the rest—as mean as they make 'em!"

A flash came into Julian's dark eyes, and he made as if to speak, but was interrupted by an angry chorus from the other juniors.

"Fork out, Julian!"

"Stand your whack, you mean boulder!"

"Shell up the shekels, Yiddisher!"

Julian sprang up from the chair, his cheeks flushed with crimson.

The juniors were all gathered round him now, and there was not one friendly look. Tom Merry, Blake, D'Arcy—all were against him.

Tom Merry rattled the box again.

"Are you going to contribute, Julian, or are you too mean to part up with your cash?" he asked point-blank.

Julian set his teeth hard.

He, too, was angry now, and it was with difficulty that he restrained his wrath.

"I've told you that I'm not going to contribute, and that's flat!" he exclaimed. "If any one of you thinks he can extract the money from me by force he's welcome to try!"

"Who'll fight the rotter for a shilling?" jeered Racke; and there was a laugh.

Dick Julian's dark eyes glittered like points of fire.

He kept his anger back with an effort and strode to the door.

Hisses and groans followed him.

"I say, you chaps, I think we ought to take the money from the rotten Shylock!" said Baggy Trimble. "We've all stood our share willingly—"

"Like you, for instance!" said Blake, with heavy sarcasm.

"Ahem! As I was saying about this tight-fisted rotter—"

"Oh, let him go!" said Tom Merry impatiently. "If Julian can't or won't contribute, then he needn't. But I hope he'll alter his mind later on and pay up."

Julian did not say a word.

He opened the Common-room door and with a bitter look at the juniors he strode away down the corridor. Jeers and catcalls followed him from Crooke & Co.

"Yah! Mouldy Jew!"

"Do you want shent per shent for your money?"

Tom Merry did not join in the cries after Dick Julian.

He stood there with the box, a troubled and puzzled expression on his face, and when Julian was gone he turned to his chums and beckoned them to go with him.

They saw Julian walk down the stairs in front and go out of the School House into the gathering dusk of the quadrangle. The Jewish junior's dark, handsome face was drawn and set, his eyes still glittering as he walked straight on as if unseeing and disappeared from view.

CHAPTER 2.

At Loggerheads with the Form!

"WHAT about Julian?"

George Figgins, the lanky-legged hero of the New House of St. Jim's, asked that question of Tom Merry in the school gymnasium next day.

Tom Merry & Co. and Figgins & Co. had been practising in the gym together with Mr. Jessop, the new sports master, and sides had been made up for a tug-o'-war.

A tug-o'-war between School House and New House juniors in the gym after lessons was always popular, and all the juniors had turned up except one.

Dick Julian, one of the most useful men on Tom Merry's side, was not in his usual place.

Tom Merry's sunny brow clouded with a frown at Figgins' question.

"Julian—the silly ass—is slacking!" he replied gruffly. "He got huffy yesterday when I asked him to contribute to Kildare's fund—"

"My only hat!" exclaimed Figgins. "You don't mean to say Julian is keeping up bad feeling over that! I heard about him refusing to part up with any cash, but I'm blessed if I can understand it. Julian's a Jew, of course, but all Jews aren't grabbers, and I certainly didn't think that Julian was one, anyway."

"Well, Julian's refused to give anything to the fund, and not only that, he's sulked about it ever since," growled Jack Blake. "The chaps are calling him a Shylock, and I reckon they're about right. Julian's getting as tight-fisted as anything, and it's making him seedy. He didn't turn up to footer practice this morning. Gussy saw him in the Form-room moping. He wouldn't look at anyone at dinner-time, and he was scowling all through lessons. Lathom picked him up over it this afternoon, and gave him a couple of hundred licks of Livy to get on with. And it served him jolly well right. B-r-r-r-r!"

Blake snorted in deep disgust.

"Ready, there?" snapped Mr. Jessop.

The new games master was not popular with the juniors. He was inclined to be a bully. He had a short temper and a very short manner.

The tug-o'-war commenced, each side yanking away lustily at the rope. Back and forth they swayed, until Figgins & Co. gained the mastery by degrees.

The School House juniors tumbled over in a heap on the floor, and Figgins & Co. roared with victorious laughter.

"Ow!" gasped Clifton Dane, rubbing his head, which had come into violent contact with Herries' plimsoll—and Herries' big feet were a byword at St. Jim's. "That was jolly rotten. The blighters wouldn't have done that, only we were one man short."

"Yes, Julian ought to be scragged for keeping away," said Talbot. "We'll get our revenge on Figgins & Co. later."

The juniors went in to tea. Kerruish and Reilly, who shared Study No. 5 with Julian, had laid in a fine supply of tuck, hoping that Julian would regain his good-humour under the cheery influence of a good tea.

It was not like the Jewish lad to be morose and sulky. His study-mates liked him, and were anxious for him to "come round."

But their good intentions were doomed to disappointment. Tea was almost ready when Julian came into Study No. 5.

His face was overcast, his brows knitted closer than their wont, and his cheeks seemed to have lost some of their healthy glow.

"Sit down, old chap," said Kerruish, not appearing to notice Julian's manner. "There's a good spread on board to-day, and it won't be long now. We're just waiting for the toast and the sosses."

"I've only come for my books," said Julian in a low voice. "I don't want any tea."

"Look here, you ass—"

"Pass me my Liddell and Scott, please, Reilly."

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Reilly turned a glowing face to his study-mate from the region of the fender.

"Faith, an' I'll pass ye a thick ear, Julian, my bhoy, if ye don't give your face a treat and put a grin on," he said. "P'what's the matter wid ye, anyway?"

"Nothing," growled Julian. "I want my Latin Grammar and the lexicon."

"You stay and have tea and leave swotting till afterwards," said Kerruish, giving the Jewish lad a hard look. "You seem to be always mugging books lately, Julian. That sort of thing is bad enough in a musty Form-room, but in a chap's spare time—ugh! The sosses are done to a turn now, so you'd better stay."

"I tell you I won't stay!" exclaimed Julian angrily. "I suppose I can please myself? If you chaps won't get me the books, I'll get them myself."

Kerruish and Reilly exchanged looks. They stood together as by common consent and barred Julian's progress towards the bookcase.

"No books for you yet, old top!" said Kerruish cheerfully. "Be a sensible chap and have tea. I—Ow!"

The Manx junior gave vent to that cry as Julian's fist drove hard into his chest. Kerruish reeled back, and as he did so Reilly made a grab at Julian. He received a shove that sent him hurtling backwards on top of Kerruish, and they both lurched into the table and fell.

Bump, bump! Crash!

"Yaroooooooh!"

The teapot went over, and a stream of boiling hot tea poured over the hapless pair on the carpet. At the same time the plate of sausages, which Reilly had placed on the edge of the table, was tipped up, and the sausages fell to the floor.

Julian, in making a quick stride forward to the bookcase, trod on one of those succulent edibles, and a yell arose from Reilly.

"Tare an' hounds! He's treadin' on the sosses!"

"Groogh! Yow-wow! I'm scalded!" moaned Kerruish. "Grab the rotter!"

Julian had his books now, and he made for the door, expecting to dodge his now exasperated chums. But Kerruish and Reilly were too quick for him. They grabbed his legs, and brought him crashing over, to keep them company on the floor.

"Yaroooop! Leggo!" roared Julian.

"Now, you rotter, we'll show you!" panted Kerruish. "We'll—Yaroooh! Wow! Hold him!"

Julian was struggling with the ferocity of a tiger. The sausages were all soon trampled on, and other things fell from the table, to be reduced to utter ruin and uselessness on the floor.

Kerruish and Reilly overpowered Julian at last.

Kerruish ladled up the pickles that were mixed in a heap with the condensed milk on the carpet. This mixture he rubbed into Julian's black, curly hair.

The Hebrew junior roared and struggled.

"Yarooooooh! You cads! Leggo! Stop it! Yah! Woop!"

"Now the tea-leaves!" said Kerruish grimly. "I'll give him kindness after this!"

Tea-leaves and butter followed the pickles and condensed milk as a dressing for Julian's hair. The remains of the sausages, some broken crockery, and a few rounds of hard toast were rammed down his back, and then he was carried to the door.

"Out with him!" said Kerruish.

"Yow-wow! You cads, I'll pay you for—Ooooooh!"

Whiz!

Julian went through the open door like a rocket. He landed in the passage outside at the feet of Jack Blake & Co. and Levison.

Bump!

"Yaroooooooh!"

"There!" said Kerruish, glaring out of the doorway of Study No. 5. "We're finished with that sulky rotter after this! Julian can go hang!"

And, slamming the study door, he returned to help Reilly clear up the wreckage and salve as much of the tuck as possible.

Several other fellows had come out of their studies, attracted by the commotion in the passage.

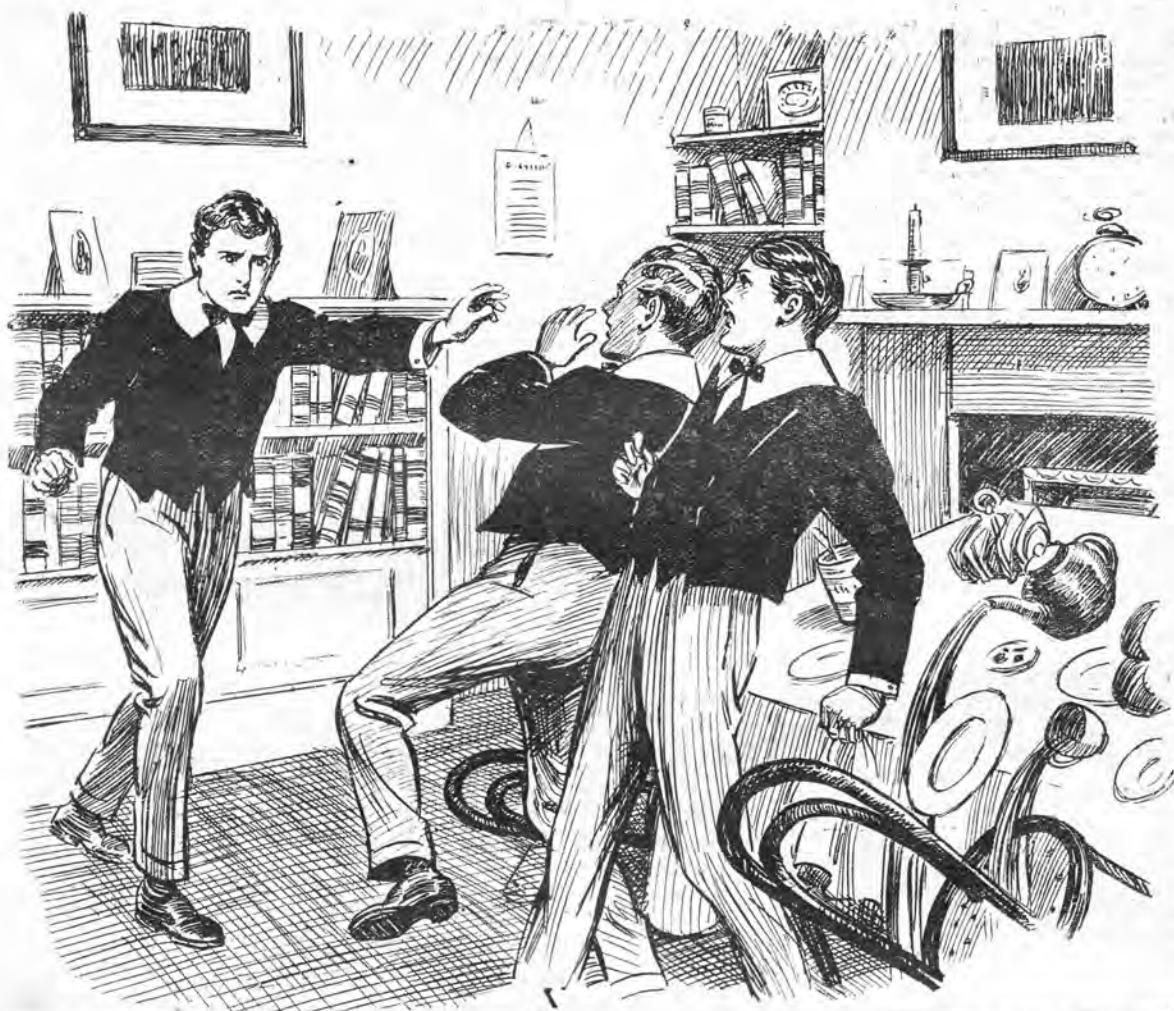
Laughs arose when Julian's plight was seen.

The Jewish lad lay on the linoleum, gasping. He blinked round with furious eyes.

"He, he, he!" sniggered Baggy Trimble. "So Julian's been kicked out! And quite right, too—that's what I say! I couldn't stand a Jew in my study at any price! Look at his hair, you chaps! He, he, he!"

Julian struggled to his feet and limped away to the bathroom.

He left no sympathy behind in the Fourth Form passage,



"No books for you yet, old top!" said Kerruish, barring Julian's progress to the bookcase. "Be a sensible chap and have tea. I—Ow!" Kerruish gave vent to that cry as Julian's fist drove hard into his chest. Kerruish reeled back, and as he did so Reilly made a grab at Julian. Kerruish bumped into him, and the two went hurtling backwards against the table. Bump! Crash! (See page 6.)

and he encountered none on the way upstairs. He found himself the object of derision by all who saw him.

Julian did not appear in public again that evening.

Racke & Co. saw him pacing up and down in the cloisters, but the young scamps of the Lower School did not disturb him, for the simple reason that he looked in a dangerous mood, and, although they were three to one, they did not care much about tackling Dick Julian in that mood, having had much past experience of his hitting powers.

CHAPTER 3.

Not Wanted!

THE next day one thing was very noticeable in the School House at St. Jim's—Dick Julian was barred. There had been no formal decision by the juniors on the subject; they had dropped into the way of it, and it came about gradually.

Julian still persisted in refusing to part with any money. He maintained his moody, sullen manner, and avoided his schoolfellows as much as he could.

But he had to mix with them sometimes, and it was then that he realised what had happened.

Nobody spoke to him, except Racke & Co., and their remarks were of open scorn. He was called a mean Jew and a grasping Shylock. Tom Merry & Co. and Jack Blake & Co. did not back up the rotters' brigade, yet at the same time they did not display any friendliness towards Julian.

Julian was barred!

Saturday came round—the day of the great match at Bagshot between the travelling team of New Zealand boys and the Southshire Junior F.C.

St. Jim's had looked forward to it eagerly, and Kildare had made all possible arrangements.

The fund had been a great success, and three large charabancs had been chartered, to take practically every boy from the old school to see the match at Bagshot.

Morning lessons were an ordeal to pupils and masters alike, and the matron was horrified at the manner in which dinner was gulped down that day.

Prompt to time, the handsome red charabancs drew up at the school gates.

Wally D'Arcy, who, with a tribe of fags, had been waiting on the School House steps, was the first to see them, and he gave a wild whoop.

Grasping Jameson round the neck, he executed a dance of glee.

"Hurrah! Let us be joyful! The giddy charabancs are here!"

"Groooooogh! Gerroff! Oooch! Ow! Leggo!" gurgled Jameson. "Wally, you idiot, I—Ow! Yarooooogh!"

Wally also gave a yell, for both lost their footing at the top of the steps and went rolling down them, still locked in each other's embrace.

The Terrible Three and Blake & Co., emerging from the hall door, were just in time to see Wally and Jameson land in a puddle at the base of the steps.

"Ow!" gasped Wally.

"Gerroogh!" gurgled Jameson.

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Tom Merry. "What's the idea, kids? A new form of mud-bathing?"

"Bless their little hearts!" said Monty Lowther. "How these children do delight to romp in the dirt! Gussy, were you like this at Wally's tender age?"

Arthur Augustus screwed up his monocle in horror.

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"Bai Jore! Wathah not, deah boy!" he exclaimed. "Wallay, get up this instant!"

Wally and Jameson arose from the puddle and glared at each other.

"Weally, Wallay, I am more than a-shamed of you!" said the swell of the Fourth in disgust. "Go in and change your collah at once!"

"Oh, come off it, Gús!" said Wally cheerfully. "There's only a splash or two on the giddy collar, so I won't change it. There are inkstains on it, too, so the mud won't-matter very much."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Wallay, you howwid little wuffian—"

"The charabancs are waiting!" roared Tom Merry. "And Figgins & Co. are racing across from the New House to bag the front seats! Kim on, boys!"

"This way, Gussy!" said Blake. "Quick, duffer!"

"Weally, Blake, I wufese to be chawactewised as a— Yawwoogh! Yah! Pway do not dwag me along in that wuff mannah, Blake! Ow! You are wumplin' my jacket, and—wow-wowow!—disawwangan' my necktie! Oh deah! Yooogh!"

"Come along, dummy!" roared Blake. "The New House microbes are after the charabancs!"

"Oh, gwent Scott! That altahs mattahs! Wun like any-thin', deah boys!"

Tom Merry & Co. and Figgins & Co. arrived together at the first charabanc. The two parties met on the steps, and a wild and whirling conflict ensued.

Toppers and caps went sailing into the air, and above the cries of woe came the shouts of the rival leaders:

"Pile in, School House!"

"Sock it to 'em, New House!"

Reinforcements from the School House dashed to the scene, but before Figgins & Co. could be annihilated Kildare and a posse of prefects took a hand in the proceedings, with the result that Tom Merry & Co. and Figgins & Co. were separated and sorted out with some difficulty. Most of the juniors looked dishevelled and very much the worse for wear. Arthur Augustus, who had figured heroically in the conflict, was smothered with muddy water, so that he was in almost as bad a condition as his minor of the Third; and his topper, when rescued by Talbot from underneath the charabanc, resembled a concertina more than a hat!

"Now, you kids, no more of this rowdylism!" commanded Kildare sternly. "Get up into that charabanc in good order, and don't quarrel!"

"Right-ho, Kildare!"

The juniors, making peace for the time being, took their seats in the charabanc and waited patiently while the mighty men of the Sixth herded the fags into place. The lordly Fifth and Sixth had a charabanc all to themselves.

A slim junior figure came walking across from the School House.

Clifton Dane saw him, and exclaimed:

"I say, chaps, here comes Julian!"

Dick Julian, his face red, stood on the steps looking at the charabancs.

He looked up at the juniors, who were in their seats.

Hostile looks greeted him everywhere.

"Here's the Jew!"

"Shylock's turned up!"

"Anybody got an apple-core?"

Julian flushed, clenched his fists, and turned away.

Kildare came walking up, and, seeing Julian, stopped.

"Looking for a seat, Julian?" he asked. "There's room in that charabanc, isn't there?"

The Jewish lad bit his lip.

"Yes, but—"

"But what?"

"I—I haven't paid anything towards—"

"That's all right, kid!" said the big-hearted skipper, clapping Julian on the back. "This outing is open to all. That was the idea, you know, of the collection. Hop up quickly, for we're just off!"

Julian turned a haggard pair of eyes towards the charabanc where his fellow-juniors were installed.

"Here's a seat, Julian!" said Darrell of the Sixth, opening a door at the back of the coach.

The last row of seats was empty, and Julian, his face scarlet, climbed up into the charabanc and sat down.

Darrell banged the door shut.

All the juniors' eyes were now on the Jewish lad.

He sat there, his eyes lowered, and his lips twitching.

"So the wily Jew has sneaked into the party, after all!" sneered Crooke, who had at the last minute decided to go with the others to Bagshot. "Just like a Jew—give nothing, but take all. You get on well in this country, don't you, Julian?"

"I vote we kick him out!" said Mellish. "We don't want that mean beast with us!"

"No fear!"

"Out with him!"

"Chuck him back into the quad!"

Julian rose from his seat and faced his angry schoolfellows.

"I—I was a fool to have come!" he muttered brokenly. "I wanted badly to see the match, but—"

"But you didn't like the idea of paying, when you knew you could get there and back for nothing—with a free tea thrown in!" sneered Gore.

Julian's eyes flashed for a moment, but the dull light returned—a light of hopelessness and misery, which Tom Merry, watching the Hebrew lad keenly, could not remember having seen in his eyes before.

Julian made to get out of the charabanc, but as he did so the driver gave a honk on his horn, and the vehicle moved.

A howl of wrath arose from the juniors as they found themselves moving down the Rylcombe Lane, away from St. Jim's.

"We've got the tight-fisted beast with us!"

"Julian's sneaked into the party, after all!"

"Out with young Shylock!"

Crooke, Grundy, and Gore led the pack of juniors that swarmed over the backs of the seats of the moving charabanc. Julian crouched against the padded back of the charabanc and faced his angry schoolfellows with squared shoulders and clenched fists.

"I'll get out of this charabanc as soon as I can," he said, between his teeth; "but you won't throw me out!"

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"Ha, ha! Won't we!" said Crooke, in his burly, bullying way. "We shall see about that! Grab him!"

Crooke jumped over the seat separating him and Julian, his fists going out towards the Jewish lad. At the same instant Julian's right came up and drove hard into Crooke's face. The burly Shell fellow let out a yelp of pain and reeled back.

His eyes blazed malice at the Hebrew junior.

"Hang you! I'll make you pay for that!" he hissed thickly.

Gore was at his side now, and the two flung themselves at Julian.

Julian, perfectly self-possessed, drove them back with his quick-flashing left and right. A hefty uppercut drew claret from Gore's rather prominent nasal organ, whilst Crooke received a hammer-like blow on the point of the chin that felled him like a log to the floor of the charabanc.

"Come on!" panted Julian, as the others came piling over the seats. "I'll take on the lot of you!"

"Down with the cad!"

"Spifficate the rotter!"

A roar came from the charabanc behind, in which Kildare & Co. were driving.

"You little rascals! Stop that fighting!"

"Order there! Do you hear?"

The juniors may have heard, but they paid no heed.

Tom Merry & Co. held back; most of the others went to the attack of the Jewish lad.

Julian, plucky as he was, found himself overwhelmed.

He was thrown to the floor of the charabanc, and two or three juniors sat upon him.

"Got him!" panted Grundy. "Now we want to get rid of the rotten Shylock!"

"I say, there's a cartload of pigs just ahead of us!" exclaimed Trimble. "What a lark to dump him in with the pigs!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

This idea was greeted by the others with acclamation.

As Trimble had pointed out, a farm-cart, loaded with live pigs, was lumbering along the lane ahead of the charabanc. A pandemonium of squeals and grunts could be heard issuing from the cart.

A few minutes later the charabanc drew level with the farm-cart.

Julian, struggling and fighting wildly, was lifted up in a score of willing hands and dropped over the charabanc side into the pig-cart.

"Hi, you young raskils—" roared the cart-driver.

His voice was drowned by the shrill screams of the porkers, who were stricken to terror by the new arrival in their midst. What had before been a pandemonium of noise now became a babel.

Julian struggled in the meshes of the net over the cart, while the pigs beneath him squealed in fright.

Through the deafening noise, however, Julian heard the mocking laughter of his schoolfellows as the charabanc bore them onward down the lane.

The farm-cart rumbled to a stop, and a coarse, red face glared over at Julian.

"These 'ere is fine goin's hon, Hi must say!" snorted the driver. "Which hi Hi catches them little whelps—"

"Help me out, will you?" said Julian, standing up with difficulty. "I—I'm sorry for this, but—but those fellows were just playing a joke on me."

The man mumbled and growled to himself, but assisted Julian out from the cart.

The St. Jim's junior leaped down into the road, and the cart went on.

The charabancs were now out of sight, and the miserable lad turned to trudge back to St. Jim's.

His brows were knitted and his lips set in a thin, hard line. Julian did not know how soon he got back to the old school; his brain was racing all the time with other thoughts. He reached St. Jim's and walked through the gates into the Close.

Not a soul was in sight.

St. Jim's seemed to be deserted, except for the birds that were fluttering among the old elm-trees. And, so far as the Jewish lad was concerned, the school actually was deserted, for most of the boys had gone to Bagshot, and the others, who had different interests, had taken their several ways out-of-doors. It was a glorious afternoon.

Dick Julian was alone at St. Jim's.

His depression weighed heavily on him, like a mountain of misery crushing his very soul. Had any of his tormentors seen Julian as he climbed the School House steps and went indoors, even the hardest heart might have been touched to compassion for the utterly lonely lad.

He went up to his study, and, flinging himself into the armchair, he buried his face in his hands.

The sun was bathing St. Jim's in happy autumn brilliance, but the sunshine meant nothing to Julian. For him it was a black half-holiday indeed.

CHAPTER 4.

Julian's Secret!

TOM MERRY & Co. and the others did not return until nearly locking-up time that evening, and all were flushed and happy with enjoyment of the match.

It had been a great game, and the dashing New Zealanders had won a great victory, and Kildare was given three rousing cheers for the part he had played in getting the St. Jim's fellows to see the match.

After prep, Tom Merry & Co. busied themselves with their own footer affairs.

The Terrible Three and Blake & Co. discussed matters in Study No. 10.

"Let me see, it's time to rake in the chaps' subscriptions for the junior footer club," said Tom Merry, consulting his book. "They're overdue now. Your job now is to go round worrying for cash, Blake. The chaps have all got footer well in their minds now, so strike while the iron's hot."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"All right," said Blake, taking out his notebook. "I've got the list of members here. And I'll bother you chaps for your tin first."

Tom Merry & Co. cheerfully paid up their subscriptions.

Jack Blake entered then down in his notebook. Blake, as secretary and treasurer of the St. Jim's Junior Football Club, had onerous duties to perform. Getting in the subscriptions was one of the most onerous. It was curious how fellows would let that slide. Some were too hard up at various times to find the cash, whilst others held over their payments through sheer laziness. But Blake, when on the warpath, usually managed to rake in the major part of the subscriptions.

Blake went his rounds of the Shell first. Bernard Glyn, in the study next to the Terrible Three's headquarters, was busy on another of his weird inventions, and steadfastly refused to admit Blake. The footer club secretary was bawling lurid remarks through the keyhole and kicking at the door when Clifton Dane and Kangaroo came along.

They had the doubtful pleasure of sharing Study No. 11 with the schoolboy inventor, and were accustomed to being locked out. Glyn preferred not to have his study-mates about him when engaged on a ticklish task. Perhaps that was because they objected to having the study made in a mess, and were apt occasionally to break up Glyn's contraptions and stuff the works down his neck.

Blake managed to get Dane's and Noble's footer subscriptions, so he allowed Glyn's to stand over, and he left those two youths to continue the process of howling through the keyhole and kicking at the door.

Grundy, Wilkins, and Gunn were at home, and the great George Alfred condescended to pay his money, although he impressed upon Blake the fact that, although he paid his subscriptions to the club, he hardly ever played in an important match. That omission on Tom Merry's part, according to Grundy, was not only unfair to him—Grundy—but was also a veritable and wanton act of treachery to the team, inasmuch as Grundy considered himself to be far and away the best player in the Lower School—possibly in the whole of St. Jim's.

Blake cheerfully entered the money in his book, told Grundy politely to fry his face, and then went to Racke's study.

Blake kicked at the door and walked in. There was a haze of tobacco smoke in the room, and Racke, Crooke, Mellish, and Scrope looked round with startled expressions, hastily concealing their lighted cigarettes under the table.

"Oh!" gasped Racke, drawing a deep breath of relief when he saw Blake. "So it's you!"

Blake sniffed.

"Yes, it's me!" he said contemptuously. "Thank your lucky stars I'm not a prefect, or I'd lam the lot of you snooky rotters!"

Racke sneered.

"If you've come to preach you can sheer off, Blake!" he said insolently. "And close the door behind you, please!"

"I've come for your footer subscription, Racke," said Blake, flourishing his notebook. "Yours and Crooke's are due, and I'm raking them all in. Money, please!"

"Go and eat coke!" growled Racke. "I'm not paying any subscriptions this season. I never get a game, so why should I?"

"You smoke too much to play footer, but you can watch the matches and cheer," said Blake.

"Rats! Not good enough."

"Then you're staying-out, Racke?"

"You bet!"

"What about you, Crooke?"

"Leave me out, too," said the burly Shell fellow, with a scowl. "I don't happen to be in Tom Merry's select circle of pals, and so, of course, don't get much of a look in where footer is concerned."

"Look here, Crooke, you could play a decent game of footer if you wished!" said Blake. "You've got it in you if only you'd leave Racke and his rotten ways alone. Smoking and gambling and breaking bounds at nights make a chap weedy, and you can't expect Tom Merry to put an unfit bouncer like you in the team. You'd stand a chance if you chucked playing the giddy goat. I don't bother much about Racke, but I do know you could be decent if you tried."

Gerald Crooke's face flushed, and Racke's thin face creased into a scowl. Aubrey Racke knew that what Blake said was true. Crooke, bully and blackguard though he was, had a large measure of good in him, which was more than could be said for some of the rotters' brigade at St. Jim's. But Crooke's nature erred on the weak side, and he allowed himself to be influenced by Racke.

"When you've finished your sermon, Blake, perhaps you'll go?" snarled Racke. "You'd better go now if you'd rather leave peacefully by the door. Otherwise you might get chucked out of the window."

Blake looked at Crooke.

"What about it, Crooke?" he asked.

"Leave me out!" growled the burly Shell fellow, catching a hasty glance from Racke. "I might join later if I think it's worth while."

"Stay out and be blowed, then!" snorted Blake contemptuously.

He slammed the door of Study No. 7 with a bang and called on Talbot. He took Talbot's money, and then went along to the Fourth Form passage.

"Let me see, there's Kerruish and Reilly and Julian to be donned," he murmured. "I wonder if I shall be able to get anything out of Julian? The blighter ought to pay his footer subscription, anyway."

He tapped at Julian's study door and entered.

The Hebrew junior was seated at the table, his chin resting on his hands, gazing unseeingly out of the window. He did not hear Blake's tap, and was unaware of the visitor's entrance until the young footer secretary touched him on the shoulder.

"Julian!" said Blake.

The junior started up as though he had been struck.

"Oh! You—you here!"

Julian's face was deathly white and his eyes were swollen and red. Blake, glancing round the table, saw that it was littered with heavy Latin volumes and exercise-books, some of which still lay open before the Jewish lad.

Blake looked at Julian in concern and wonder.

"Julian, what is the matter? You look ill!"

Julian passed a hand across his brow vaguely.

"Do I?" he muttered.

"Yes. Are you seedy?"

"No," Julian's voice was dull and toneless. "I—I'm all right."

"Been swotting all the afternoon?" asked Blake, looking again at the books. "My hat! What a giddy collection! Have you taken to book-mugging for a hobby, Julian? You never used to be a swot!"

Julian gave a bitter laugh.

"There isn't much of a hobby attached to this," he said.

"I'm mugging up for the Grafton Prize."

"Whew!"

Blake looked more surprised than ever.

The Grafton Prize was a minor scholarship consisting of a money grant of £20, and it was usually entered for by the poorer boys of the school. The examination for this was due to take place very shortly, and several boys were known to be swotting hard for it. Dick Brooke, the day boy of the Shell, was not entering for it this year as he was studying for a more important exam, so the result was fairly open. Tom Merry & Co. did not take much interest in the exam, as none of them had any need to enter for it. A fellow whose people were well off would not enter for the Grafton Prize.

Julian's pallid cheeks flushed.

"You—you're surprised that I've entered for the Grafton?" he said.

"Yes, I am!" replied Blake a little curtly. "I should have thought you had no need to enter for that, Julian. Twenty quid isn't much to you!"

Julian was silent.

"There's no law to prevent you from entering, I suppose?" said Blake. "But you know what the chaps will think when they know, Julian. They'll call it money-grabbing—if you win. And if you don't win, you won't get any the better liked for having entered."

"I don't care," said Julian quietly. "My affairs do not concern the other fellows. I'm a Jew—a money-grabber—so let it go at that."

"Well, it's no bizney of mine," said Blake. "My job is to collect the footer subscriptions. Practically everyone has paid now, and I want yours. Have you got the cash?"

"Cash!" said Julian.

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"Yes, that's what I'm after. The sub's overdue now, Julian. Pay up!"

"Look here—"

"Oh, rats! Pay up!"

"I—I—"

"I've screwed it out of the other chaps, and I'm going to screw it out of you," said Blake cheerily. "Hang it all, Julian, you needn't be so tight-fisted as to begrudge paying your footer sub. You can be as tight and careful as you like, but you must draw a line somewhere. Pay up!"

Julian's lips twitched.

"I—I was going to keep it to myself and let the others go hang!"—he muttered. "But I suppose I had better tell you."

"Tell me what?"

"I haven't got the money."

"Gammon!"

"Honour bright!" said the Jewish junior wearily. "I'm broke!"

Blake softened a little.

"I'm sorry, Julian. The sub can wait, of course, until you get your next remittance," he said.

"That's just the point. There isn't going to be a next remittance."

"Are you trying to be funny, Julian?"

Julian smiled bitterly.

"There's nothing funny in a fellow being broke and not expecting any more money from home, is there?" he said quietly.

"But—but—I don't understand," said Blake. "Why the dickens aren't you getting any more money from home?"

"For what better reason than that there isn't any money at home to come?"

"My hat! You mean—"

"I mean that my father's business has collapsed, and he is ruined," said Julian quietly. "He is overwhelmed in debt, and—and I don't quite know how he'll manage. It all came about through his partner being a traitor. The crash came suddenly, and it's taken us absolutely by storm. I'm not getting another stiver, and what money I had I sent back home—a little, it's true, but it helped."

Blake gulped something down in his throat, and a feeling welled up in his heart—a feeling that he could hardly define.

"Oh, Julian, I—I say, old chap, I'm awfully sorry!" he stammered.

"That's all right!" said the Jewish lad, with a wan smile.

"I know you thought the same about me as the others—that being a Jew, I'm close-fisted by instinct, and that I've been too mean lately to spend anything."

"Why didn't you tell us you were hard up, instead of leaving it to the cads like Racke and Mellish to down you, and—and influence the others against you?" demanded Blake.

A hard glitter came into Julian's eyes.

"As a Jew, I have my pride," he said tersely. "I was too proud to explain to the school—and I lost my temper, too. I don't care what the others think. They've downed me as a money-grabbing Jew, and let them keep it up. I'm entering for the Grafton, not because I'm greedy for the money, but because I desperately need it. The position is this, Blake—my father has not yet paid my school fees for this term. They are due this month. He cannot, of course, afford to pay them, and unless I win this money I—I shall have to leave St. Jim's."

"Oh crumbs!" exclaimed Blake, in concern.

"I'm telling you this in confidence, Blake, and I want you to promise, honour bright, not to mention a word to anyone!"

"I'd like to let Tom Merry know—so that he can stick up for you if there happens to be trouble," said Blake. "You can trust Tom Merry the same as you can trust me, Julian."

The other nodded.

"Very well, Blake, perhaps Tom Merry had better know. But to others it must be kept a secret. As I said before, I am proud. Poverty cannot rob a Jew of his pride."

"Right-ho, Julian. I promise for myself and for Tom Merry. I'm sorry I worried you about the subscription. I'll stand it myself—"

"Thanks all the same, Blake, but I cannot let you do that," said Julian. "I don't want to be in debt. If I can't pay the sub, I shall keep out of the footer."

"But let me pay—I don't want you to repay me for—"

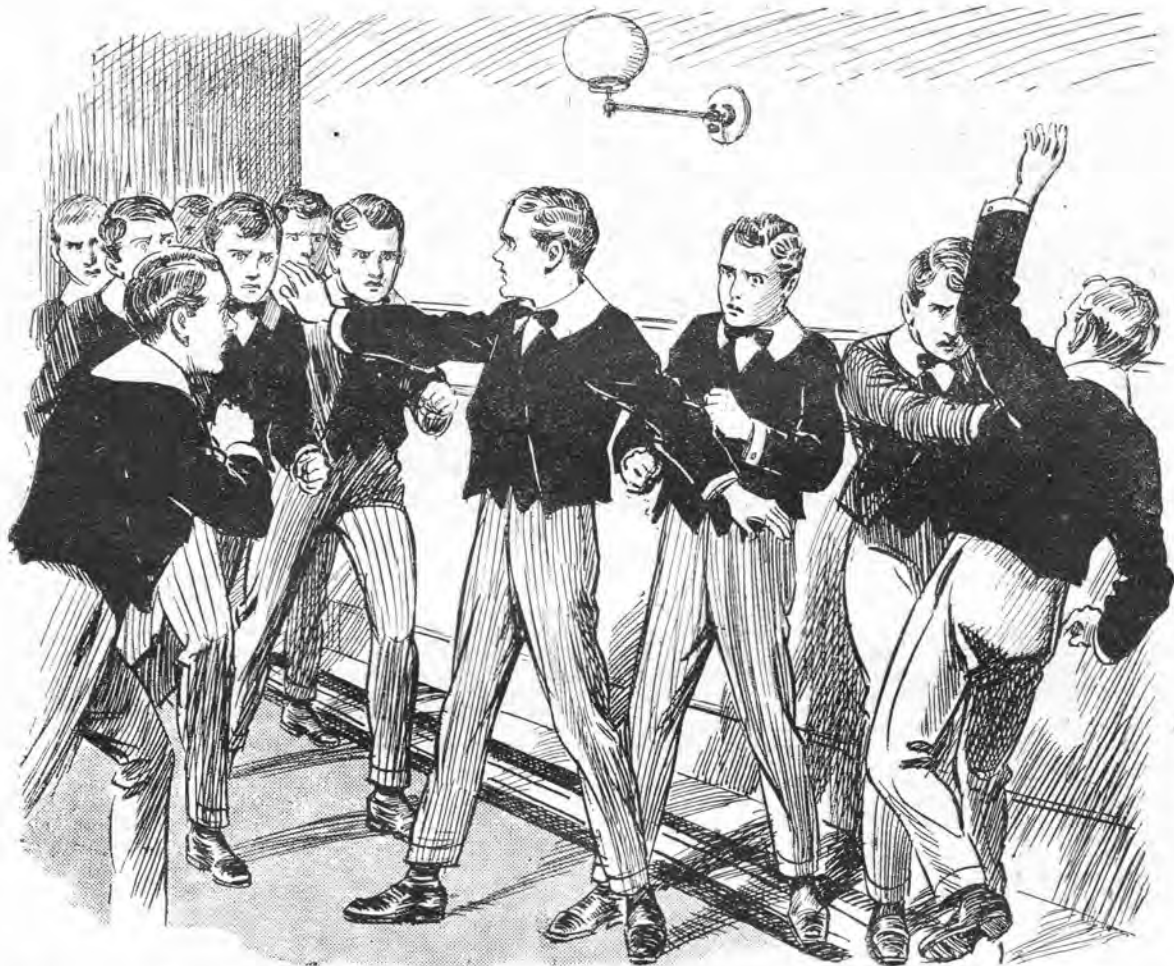
Julian laughed and shook his head.

"I'm awfully obliged, Blake, but accepting charity, to me, is worse than running into debt."

"I'm sorry if I've hurt your feelings, Julian," said Blake, flushing a little.

"No, my feelings aren't hurt," said the Jewish junior a little huskily. "I'm grateful to you, Blake, really. Perhaps I'm too proud—for a Jew."

"Don't be an ass, Julian!" rapped Blake quickly. "I



"Bump the blessed Hebrew!" roared Racke. "We'll give him scholarship! We'll make him withdraw!" "Hear, hear!" A rush was made at Julian, who commenced to hit out staunchly. "Hands off, you idiots!" shouted Tom Merry. "You can't compel a chap to withdraw from an exam!" Aubrey Racke faced Tom Merry and his eyes blazed fiercely. (See page 13.)

think you're a brick to stand what you have. I wonder how you can swot, with all the worry you've got on your mind."

"I'm all right," muttered Julian, with a weary gesture. "I—I've had all the afternoon to myself, you know. I've done a lot this afternoon."

"And made yourself ill," said Blake, with a compassionate look at his Form fellow. "Buck up, Julian—you stand a good chance of winning the Grafton. And I jolly well hope you do win!"

"Thanks!"

Blake left the study with a cloud on his sunny face. As the door closed behind him Julian dropped his hands again and groaned.

"What am I to do? I can't stay here unless the fees are paid. I'm looked down upon as a grasping Jew, and life here may be unbearable, until the chaps settle down—to regard me permanently as a Shylock. But—but I love St. Jim's. I don't want to leave. I must win the Grafton—I must—I must!"

And the unhappy junior turned again to his books. Kerruish and Reilly left him alone, and he studied all the evening until the printed characters in the books seemed to dance before his smarting eyes.

He gave it up when the bell rang for bed, and he went upstairs to the dormitory with the rest of the Fourth.

He hardly received a word or a look, except from Blake. Mellish and Trimble and several of the others passed scathing references to the incident of the pigs that afternoon, and the Fourth as a whole chuckled over it.

Dick Julian lay in bed and listened in mental torment.

Little did those fellows who talked of him as a stingy Jew dream that, far from being well off and close-fisted, he was in reality poorer than the boy who blacked the school boots!

CHAPTER 5.

Crooke's Resolve!

AUBREY RACKE stopped at the door of Study No. 7 in the Shell passage and entered.

Gerald Crooke was there, seated at the table with books and papers before him. He was poring over a Latin grammar, and gnawing the end of his pen when Racke came in. He looked up sullenly at the knut of the Shell.

Racke surveyed the books and papers with an air of surprise.

"Hallo!" he said. "Working?"

"Doesn't it look like it?" growled Crooke.

"What's the big idea?" inquired Racke pleasantly. "Linton given you extra swot to do?"

Crooke shook his head and went on gnawing the pen.

Racke gave him a peculiar glance.

"I noticed you were paying more than usual attention at lessons to-day, Crooke," he said. "You—you're surely not swotting?"

Crooke did not look up.

"What if I am?" he said sullenly.

Racke gave a low whistle.

"Whew! So you've taken to swotting, Crooke! What the dickens for? Are you out to get round the right side of Linton, for some reason?"

"No," replied the burly Shell fellow. "If you must know the truth, Racke—and you'll find it out to-morrow morning, anyway—I'm entering for the Grafton."

"My giddy aunt!"

Aubrey Racke's face portrayed a look of utter astonishment.

"You're entering for the Grafton—you!" he exclaimed. "Well, if that doesn't beat the band!"

"What's the objection?" demanded Croke surlily. "The exam's open to all juniors!"

"Certainly!" agreed Racke. "But you're the last chap one would expect to go in for a scholarship—unless it was Trimble. Do you reckon on pulling it off?"

"I've got to!" said Croke fiercely, clenching his fists. "I'm absolutely driven to the wall now, Racke. I'm in the hands of that rotter, Banks, at the Green Man. I've gambled and betted with him, and have lost money hand over fist. I've got to get some—to make good my debts to Banks. I've paid him all I can, and I've dunned my people for money until I dare not ask them for any more. Yet Banks is demanding full settlement of the I O U's I gave him—or he'll apply to the Head for payment."

"He'd get a fat lot that way," said Racke. "Those I O U's are not legally binding, Croke, as you are under age."

Croke gave a snarling laugh.

"Of course—I know that!" he said. "Banks knows it, too; but he knows that I dare not let him show those I O U's to the Head. Banks wouldn't get his money, but it would mean the instant sack for me. I'd be kicked out of St. Jim's in disgrace."

Racke watched his wretched companion in silence.

He and Croke—and with them Mellish, Clampe, and Scrope—had been visiting the Green Man a good deal of late. Banks, the rascally landlord of the disreputable inn by the Rhyl, always extended a warm welcome to any of the St. Jim's juniors out for a "flutter." Racke & Co. were habitual frequenters of the Green Man, where they smoked and gambled and backed their fancies with Banks, who was also a bookmaker. These pastimes formed Racke & Co.'s idea of pleasure; they considered themselves blades, and "dogs" and "goers." They paid surreptitious visits to the accommodating Mr. Banks' parlour in day-time, and broke bounds from St. Jim's at night in order to indulge their peculiar cravings for "sport."

These outings were not always profitable. Racke & Co. considered themselves extremely cute, but they were not cute enough for Mr. Banks and his bar-parlour companions. Racke had plenty of money, and he usually "stood" his misfortunes. Mellish, Scrope, and Clampe did not plunge so deeply as their leader—they could not afford to. Gerald Croke was, perhaps, the most reckless of all the St. Jim's black sheep. He was not well off, yet he had kept the pace with Racke, until now he was desperately in debt.

The rascally bookmaker had let the junior run on, and had led him deeper each day into the trap, had fanned the reckless lad's passion for gambling until he now held him in the hollow of his hand.

Croke was beginning to realise that the way of the transgressor is hard. Banks was now pressing him for payment, the amount was large, and Croke had already paid out to the limit of his resources. There were still many pounds owing, and Gerald Croke, as he himself had expressed it, was driven to the wall.

"I was a fool—a fool—to go on when I knew I couldn't afford it!" he muttered savagely. "Look here, Racke, you led me into this, and you ought to stand me a few quid—"

Racke's eyes glittered.

"Sorry, Croke, but I'm practically stumped myself," he said coolly. "I'm afraid you can't rely on me for any quids."

Croke scowled.

"No, I guessed as much!" he said bitterly. "You can keep your money, Racke. If I can win the Grafton I shall have sufficient to pay Banks, and more besides. And I stand as good a chance of winning as anyone else. I'm not exactly a dunce, and I could get practically to the top of the class if I liked. Linton told me that at last term's exam. The only fellow I might fear in the scholarship is Brooke, and he's not entering because of the Founders' Scholarship. A chap entering for the Founders' is not allowed to compete for the Grafton, and the Founders' is bigger game for Brooke. So, if I do a bit of swotting, I reckon I ought to pull off that twenty quid. Goodness knows, I need it! I've only got two alternatives—win the scholarship, or get the sack!"

"Well, I wish you luck, Croke," said Aubrey Racke. "You've certainly got brains, and as Brooke's out of it, the exam's as good as yours. I—Hullo! Here's Mellish!"

The study door had opened, and Percy Mellish of the Fourth sidled in.

The newcomer closed the door behind him and looked at Croke and Racke with a peculiar foxy grin. That grin was always apparent on Mellish when he had any news to impart. As a sneak and a Paul Pry he had only one rival at St. Jim's—Baggy Trimble. And Mellish, being the craftier of the two, was the more dangerous.

"I say, what do you think?" he sniggered. "I've found out about Julian. He's as poor as a church mouse!"

Racke gave an incredulous laugh.

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"Don't talk piffle, Mellish!" he said. "That rotten Hebrew is rolling in money. Jews always are. Julian may have told you he's hard up, but that's only part of his game."

"But he didn't tell me. I heard Blake telling Tom Merry," said the sneak of the Fourth eagerly. "And I reckon it's true, too! It seems that Julian confided in Blake yesterday and told him that his pater's business has gone broke, and his partner has run off, leaving him simply swamped in debt. Julian's allowance has been stopped, and his school fees aren't even paid yet."

"Whew!" whistled Racke. "My word!"

"I suppose you've noticed how seedy Julian has been looking lately," said Mellish. "Well, that's the reason. He's been wondering how to hang on here."

Racke drew a deep breath.

"So that's it!" he muttered. "I thought, of course, that it was because we had been barring him for his stinginess that—"

"He, he, he! The rotter couldn't help being stingy—he's broke to the wide!" chuckled Mellish. "He's been having tea in Hall—"

"The chaps all say he's too mean to spend his money on tuck!" grinned Racke. "Well, if this isn't the limit! So Julian's people are bankrupt and his school fees aren't paid. That means that Julian will have to leave. St. Jim's will be rid of that rotten Sheeny after all!"

"That all depends," said Mellish, with a leer. "Julian's got something up his sleeve. He's out to win the Grafton to pay his school fees!"

"What?" shouted Croke.

The suddenness of this outburst took Mellish by surprise.

He gave Croke quite a startled look.

"What did you say, Mellish?" said Racke swiftly. "Julian is going in for the Grafton?"

"Yes," said Mellish. "He's already given his name in, and he's swotting hard. That beastly Jew has got brains, too, and it's a sure bet that he'll win!"

Gerald Croke had started up, his face pallid and his hands clenched tight. Both Racke and Mellish glanced at him.

"What's the matter, Croke?" demanded Mellish. "You seem beastly upset!"

Racke gave a laugh.

"Croke's also in for the Grafton, so naturally he's feeling upset," he said. "He didn't bargain on Julian entering. I say, Croke, your chances of romping off with that twenty quid don't look so rosy now, do they?"

Croke ground his teeth.

"That rotten Jew is up against me!" he muttered. "That cad Julian in for the Grafton—oh, my hat!"

"But what ever made you enter for the scholarship, Croke?" said Mellish inquisitively. "I shouldn't think that was much in your line!"

"It's a case of have to with him, old thing," grinned Racke, who seemed to enjoy the situation. "Croke also happens to be broke, and Banks happens to be threatening him with exposure unless he pays up on his I O U's. So Croke, you see, is out to win that twenty quid, or things may go very hard with him."

"Oh jeminy!"

Racke sat on the table, swinging his legs easily.

"Rather hard lines on you, Croke—what?" he said.

"Julian is a clever cad, and if he likes to swot, the scholarship is as good as his. You won't stand an earthly against that crafty Hebrew!"

"I—I know!" muttered Croke fiercely. "I know!"

Dick Julian of the Fourth was a brilliant scholar, and Croke realised bitterly that the Jewish junior was more capable of winning the scholarship than he.

"What are you going to do about it, Croke?" asked Mellish.

Croke set his teeth grimly.

"Julian shan't win!" he muttered. "He's got to be stopped somehow. He's only a rotten Jew, and he's not wanted here. Let him go—nobody will be sorry. I've got to win that money, I tell you. It means everything to me! And, Racke, you've got to help me!"

"Help you what?" asked Racke sedulously.

"Help me stop Julian from winning!" came the passionate reply. "There are ways and means, Racke. When the other chaps know that he's entering for the Grafton they'll be up in arms against him. They'll think it's a money-grabbing game of his. And we'll keep them up to it, unless Julian tells them—"

"There's no fear of that!" grinned Mellish. "Julian's keeping it dark about his people being broke—pride of race, or something like that, I suppose."

"Rather unusual for a Jew to have any pride," said Racke, with a sneer. "So long as Julian keeps quiet about his real reason for entering the exam, then we can keep the chaps well up against him. You can rely on us to help you, Croke. We'd be glad to see the back of that rotten Shylock. I, for one, would do anything to get him out of St. Jim's."

"Hear, hear!" said Mellish.

Crooke's eyes gleamed.

"Then if you two will help me, we can keep Julian from winning," he said. "We'll set the other chaps against him and stop him swotting. He's got to swot up hard to stand a chance of winning, anyway."

"That's so," agreed Racke. "Don't worry, Crooke. Julian sha'n't win the Grafton. You'll have nothing to fear from him. Mellish, you've got to keep mum about Julian being broke, that's all."

"He, he, he! Trust me for that!" sniggered the cad of the Fourth.

Racke and Mellish left Study No. 7, and Crooke sat down again to work. He was disturbed at hearing of Julian's entry for the Grafton, but Crooke felt confident that the Jewish lad could be prevented from winning. Crooke needed the money to save himself from ruin and disgrace. He did not care about Julian. He was only a Jew, and a Jew wasn't really wanted at St. Jim's.

CHAPTER 6.

Shunned by the School!

NEXT morning the list of entrants for the Grafton Prize was posted on the school notice-board. Kildare, Darrell, and North were the first to see the notice, and they took a casual glance at it. All gave low whistles and exchanged glances.

"So young Julian of the Fourth has got his name down!" exclaimed North. "He's one of the last I should have expected to enter for the Grafton!"

"He's supposed to be rather well off," remarked Darrell. "He's a Jew, you know."

Kildare's face was troubled.

"Yes, Julian is a Jew, and he's been in rather bad odour among the juniors lately. I've noticed," he said quietly. "I'm afraid they won't like it when they know that Julian's in for the Grafton."

The news soon spread through the School House, and, as Kildare had predicted, the juniors did not like it.

The Sheeny was after the money for the mere greed of it. That was the interpretation the juniors—and, for that matter, the whole of St. Jim's—gave. Not satisfied with what he had got, Julian wanted more. He was after the money that many another junior would have been glad of. All except those few fellows who knew the facts looked at it in that light.

Julian had been keeping out of the way of his schoolfellows' sneers, and it had been noticed by a few that he had been swotting. Now they knew the reason for his swotting. He had set his mind on winning the Grafton. And everyone knew that Julian, of all the fellows who had entered, stood an almost certain chance of winning.

Julian came in for many hostile looks at breakfast that morning. He hurried away after the meal, and was not seen again until the bell rang for morning lessons.

He was very quiet and subdued at lessons, and many a time Mr. Lathom cast a queer glance in the Jewish lad's direction. But he had no fault to find with Julian's work. The junior had evidently been studying hard.

A crowd waited for him in the corridor outside after lessons were over.

As Julian came walking out of the Form-room, his books under his arm, a shout arose.

"Here's Shylock!"

"Now we've got the giddy Hebrew!"

"Vat price dot, shentlemen?" said Levison, and there was a laugh.

Julian flushed and halted. He had to stop, for the juniors barred his way. A fresh crowd of Shell fellows came up.

"What do you want?" asked Julian, panting.

"We want to know what you mean by it, Sheeny?" cried Racke, thrusting himself forward. "You're after the scholarship money—money that was put up for chaps who really need it. You don't need it. You mean to do the others out of it, though!"

"Shame!"

Julian looked about him fiercely. He met angry, scornful looks on all sides, and the word that stung him was shouted again and again in a growing volume of sound:

"Shylock!"

Crooke made a movement to spring upon the junior, but Tom Merry dragged him back.

The young Shell captain's eyes were blazing.

"Hold on, Crooke! Leave Julian alone!"

Crooke struggled in Tom's grasp.

"Merry's sticking up for Julian!" shouted Mellish. "He is—"

"And so am I!" cried Blake, springing to Julian's side.

"What Julian does is no bizney of anybody's, except his own. So long as he's not after your money what's the odds?"

"Yah! But he will be after it."

"Bump the blessed Hebrew!" roared Racke. "We'll give him scholarship. We'll make him withdraw!"

"Hear, hear!"

A rush was made at Julian, who commenced to hit out staunchly.

"Hands off, you idiots!" shouted Tom Merry. "You can't compel a chap to withdraw from an exam. 1— Oh! Yarobogh!"

"Bump Merry and Blake, too!"

"Rather!"

The three victims of the excited juniors went down under the rush, fighting gamely in spite of the fact that they were overwhelmed. The bumping process was in full swing when Kildare and a number of prefects, hearing the commotion, dashed to the scene and laid about them with stinging ash-plants.

Dismal howls arose, and the juniors scattered to left and right.

Kildare & Co.'s intervention had the effect of putting an end to the rag. They left Tom Merry, Blake, and Julian to sort themselves out.

Tom turned to Julian.

"It's hard cheese, old chap, but the silly fatheads don't know what they're doing!" he said ruefully. "Stick it out, Julian, if you don't choose to let them know why you're entering for the exam."

Dick Julian gritted his teeth.

"Why should I take them into my confidence? I'll stick it out!" he exclaimed fiercely. "I'll win the Grafton if I possibly can. I'm sorry you fellows have been let in for this—"

"Oh, that's all serene!" laughed Blake. "It was no worse than a good old game of Rugger. Let's run along and clean ourselves up, or we sha'n't be presentable for dinner."

Julian's entry for the Grafton became the talk of St. Jim's.

Shunned before for his apparent meanness, he was spurned now by practically the whole school. He was condemned as being covetous and grasping. But Julian kept his end up. Courage and resolution hardened him against the bitter remarks of his schoolfellows. He went about his work in the usual way, and spent all his leisure hours at his books, studying hard for the examination, the result of which meant so much to him.

He had Study No. 5 practically to himself, Kerruish and Reilly studiously keeping out of his way. That cut him to the heart, but he made no complaint.

Next day Julian took tea in Hall, and then went to his study, to spend the evening with his books. As he opened the door and entered he noticed that the fire was blazing furiously. He looked at the grate and saw that it was heaped up with books and papers, which were being swiftly devoured by the yellow, hungry flames. The fender was littered with the charred remains of text books and exercises. Julian stood dumbfounded.

His glance fell mechanically to the table, and he started.

There lay the sheets of paper on which he had been making notes, and his Latin viva voce. All were splashed with ink, and rendered utterly useless.

Other papers had been torn, and the fragments scattered about the floor.

The Jewish junior stood there as though stunned.

His exam papers and books—all were ruined!

Somebody had been into the study during his absence and maliciously destroyed them—destroyed his vital papers, which represented long, gruelling hours of study. His work had been done in vain. There was a smell of paraffin in the room, and he found an empty can near the cupboard. Paraffin had been used to fire his books.

A short, low cry escaped the junior, and he dashed over to the fireplace. Bending down, he plunged his hands into the flames in a last, despairing effort to rescue the blazing books.

He was beating them out with his fists in the hearth when a tap sounded at the door and Tom Merry and Blake entered.

"My hat! It's jolly hot in here," remarked Blake. "What are you up to, Julian—making a bonfire?"

"You'll have the place alight if you're not careful!" exclaimed Tom Merry. "What the dickens—"

Blake and Merry looked aghast at the work of destruction. Julian, his face hard and drawn, his eyes glittering, hurled the two burnt books into the fender.

His eyes met those of Tom Merry.

"Who did this?" asked Tom quietly. "Have you any idea, Julian?"

"No," replied the Jewish lad through his teeth. "I don't know. I've been down to Hall for tea, and left my papers and books on the table. This is how I found the place when I came back just now. Some scoundrels have been in here—"

"The despicable rotters!" exclaimed Tom, clenching his fists. "Of all the Hunnish tricks, this is the worst! I suppose these papers contain all your notes, Julian?"

Julian nodded.

"Yes," he said, with a catch in his voice. "It means that I've been doing all my swotting practically for nothing. This is a plot to spoil my chances of winning the exam."

Tom Merry snapped his teeth down hard.

"We'll find out who is responsible for this," he exclaimed. "Come with us, Julian! We'll see Racke first. He's the most likely culprit."

The three juniors left the study.

Tom led the way to the Shell passage. Racke was not at home when they looked into his study, but Crooke was there, seated at the table, with books and paper before him. He was evidently in the midst of study when the abrupt interruption had come.

"What do you cads want?" he snarled, jumping to his feet.

Tom Merry, Blake, and Julian closed round.

"You can probably guess what we've come about," said Tom grimly. "Do you know anything about that caddish trick played on Julian?"

"How should I know? I don't even know what you're talking about," said Crooke, scowling.

"You here, Crooke?"

It was Racke's voice at the door.

The knut of the Shell gasped when he saw Tom Merry and Blake.

Tom's arm went out in an instant, his hand fastened itself on Racke's coat-collar, and he swung its wearer farther into the room.

"Yarooogh!" roared Racke, collapsing against the table. "What do you mean by—"

"Great pip! The cad simply reeks of paraffin!" exclaimed Blake. "He's upset it down his trousers and on his jacket. Now we know who set fire to Julian's books!"

Racke covered back like a fox driven to bay.

"So it was you, Racke!" said Tom Merry.

"I—I had a hand in it, but it was a general affair," muttered Racke. "Practically everyone was in it—"

"You lie, you cad!" retorted Tom fiercely. "No decent chap would play a low-down trick like that, however much he disliked Julian!"

"I tell you all the chaps know!" whined Racke. "Crooke was in it—and the others. They said it would serve him right—"

"Well, now I'm going to serve you right, you hound!" exclaimed Dick Julian grimly. "I'm going to give you a hiding! Put up your fists!"

"I won't! I—"

"Lock the door, will you, Merry? I'm going to fight Racke—and then Crooke—and I don't want any interruptions until I've settled with them," said Dick Julian quietly.

Tom turned the key in the lock.

Julian faced Racke.

"Now, you cad, are you ready?"

Racke struck out savagely at the Jewish lad, intending to get in the first blow. Julian side-stepped neatly, and next minute both his fists crashed heavily on Racke.

The knut howled as blow after blow rained upon him. He put up a desperate defence, but it crumpled up like paper against the enraged Jewish lad's terrific onslaughts. At last Racke threw himself at Julian and tried to wrestle him to the floor.

Round and round the study they swayed, crashing over chairs and other furniture. Racke tried the cowardly expedient of kicking his opponent, but Julian flogged him after the first kick.

"Get up, you hound, and take your gruel like a man!" he panted.

Racke rose, his breath hissing, and his eyes glinting with a malevolent light. He hurled himself again at Julian, snarling, but not one of his vicious blows landed home. Julian beat him round the room again, raining blows thick and fast upon him until Racke was howling for mercy. At last Racke tripped over the carpet and went down. He sprawled there, moaning, and made no attempt to get up.

"Have you had enough, you rotter?" said Julian between his teeth.

"Ow-wow-ow! Yes!" moaned Racke.

"Now, Crooke!"

Gerald Crooke grinned evilly.

He was a big fellow, and the bully of the Lower School. Crooke, despite his bad habits, was as strong as a lion.

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and as a fighting man was feared by the majority of the juniors at St. Jim's—and by quite a few seniors.

He pushed back his cuffs and faced Julian. The slim, slightly built Jewish lad looked fair game for the hulking Shell fellow; and Crooke expected the fight to be a walk-over for him—especially as Julian had already had one fight.

Crooke struck the first blow—a smashing left to the jaw. Julian had stepped back, and so lost the full force of that sledgehammer drive. Crooke tried to follow this up with another from the right, but the Jewish lad countered it smartly, and followed up with an uppercut that landed on Crooke's chin with beautiful precision.

Crooke uttered a yell of pain and rage, and fell back.

Julian was after him like a panther.

He was in deadly earnest, and he crashed a left and right on Crooke's chest. The bully came back at him with rage and bitterness, and the two were soon fighting hammer and tongs.

"Time!" called Tom Merry, after a while. "This isn't a contest like the last. Separate them, Blake. We'll have this fight in rounds!"

Crooke and Julian were separated and given a respite. Both needed it, and agreed to settle the matter in rounds.

The noise of their trampling feet had attracted attention to the study, and there was a clamour of voices outside demanding to know what was the matter.

"Time!" called Tom again.

Crooke sprang savagely to the attack, but was brought up sharp by the rattle of Julian's knuckles on his cheek.

Four gruelling rounds were fought out. The juniors in the passage outside were on tenterhooks of curiosity and excitement, and the door vibrated with the kicks and thumps that were rained upon it.

The fifth round started, with Crooke furious and reckless. He had expected to knock Julian out long before this. The Jewish junior was panting, and his face bore signs of the punishment he had received; but he was not done yet, by any means. Crooke's temper grew worse, and his hitting wilder, and even as Tom Merry was about to call time the big fellow crashed to the floor under the weight of a right-hand drive.

"Might as well count him out," said Blake. "You've had enough, Crooke, haven't you?"

"Yes," moaned the fallen bully. "I—I'm done, hang you!"

Tom Merry unlocked the door and threw it open.

A horde of juniors crowded in.

Startled cries arose when Crooke was seen, lying huddled and beaten on the floor. Racke, his left eye discoloured, his lip swollen, and his hair and clothing in a very rumpled state, was standing by the window, scowling. The juniors looked from Crooke to Racke—and then they looked at Julian.

"My only hat!" ejaculated Talbot. "What in thunder is—"

"Julian been fighting—what!" said Monty Lowther.

"Yes; he's given these two rotters a hiding," said Tom Merry, looking round grimly at the newcomers. "They deserved three times as much as they have received—and there are a few others here, too, who ought to have a licking. Crooke and Racke were not the only ones in that affair in Julian's study!"

Talbot, Lowther, Manners, D'Arcy, and Kangaroo looked surprised, but it was apparent that Tom's words had gone home to most of the juniors.

"It was a dirty, low trick to serve on a fellow," said Tom angrily. "This persecution of Julian has got to stop! It isn't fair—"

"Faith, an' it isn't fair for the greedy spalpeen to collar that money, enroirely!" said Reilly.

"No, fear!" broke in Lennox. "If he's going to sneak to Railton, of course—"

"I sha'n't sneak," said Julian quietly. "But woe betide any fellow who tries a rotten trick like that again, that's all."

He walked from the room in company with Tom Merry and Blake.

Several juniors hissed as they passed, but the Jewish lad went on with head erect and eyes flashing indomitably.

"We'll let you have all the books you want, Julian," said Tom Merry. "Keep your pecker up, old chap. We'll do all we can, of course."

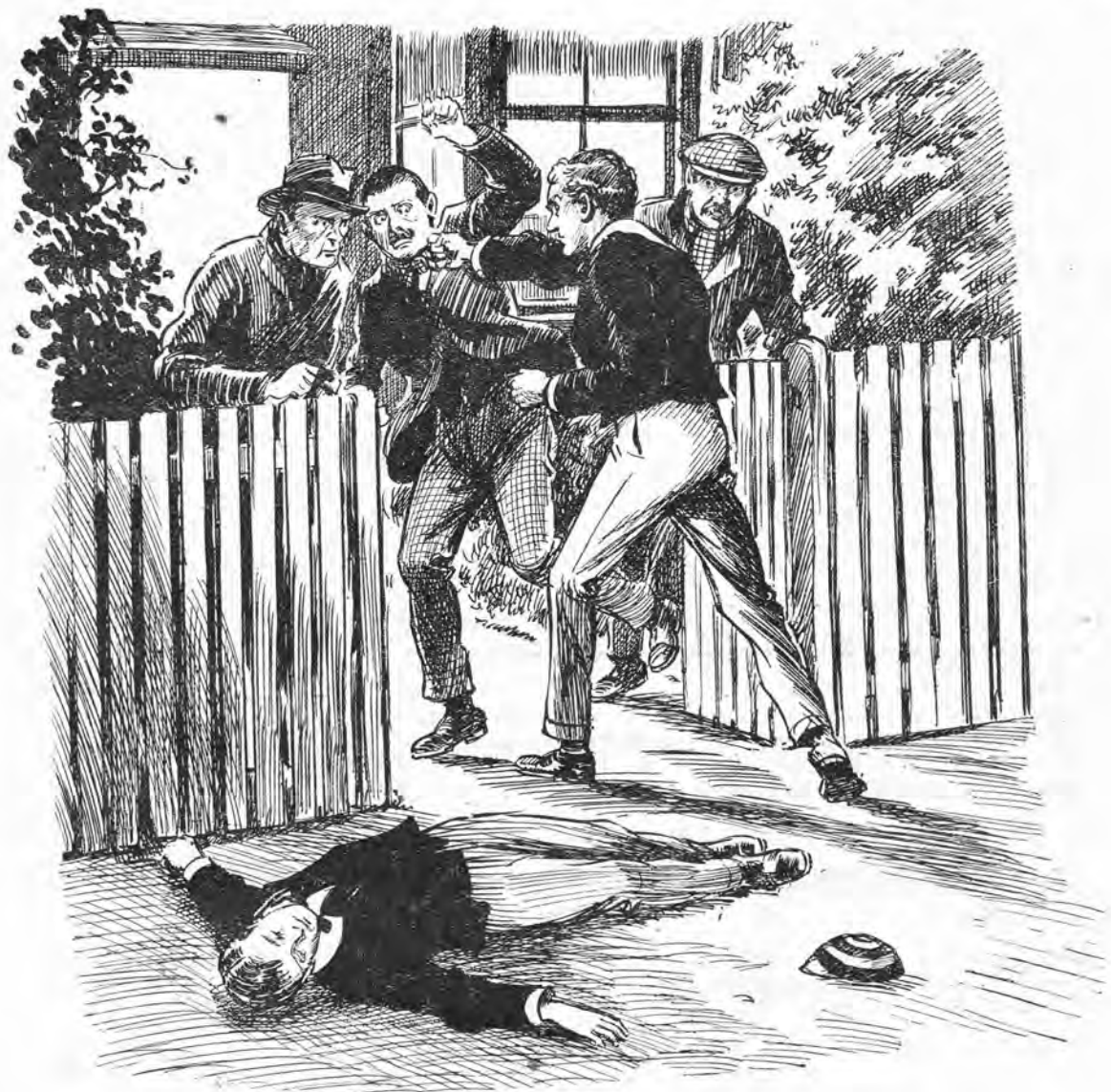
"Thanks, I know you will," said Julian huskily. "And I'll keep on. I won't give in, whatever they do."

CHAPTER 7.

The Outcast!

THE next day saw Dick Julian hard at work again with books provided him by Tom Merry and Blake.

He was resolved not to give in. He would win the Grafton if he could—such was the Jewish lad's indomitable will. It would mean intensive study now—



"Keep them back, Julian—they mean to half murder us, and I—I'm done!" Crooke's assailants pressed on. They would have seized the junior, helpless as he was, and subjected him to further violence, but Dick Julian sprang in the way. "Get back, you hounds!" he cried. "Where's your sense of fair play? Take that, you rotter!" "That" was a smashing right-hander which caught one of the men full on his stubby chin. (See page 20.)

every minute he had to spare must be devoted to the work of preparing for the examination.

Mellish saw him go into Study No. 5 that afternoon with books under his arm and lock the door. A few minutes later the cad of the Fourth, bending down at the keyhole, saw Julian poring over his work.

Mellish chuckled to himself and scuttled away.

Dick Julian was wrestling with a difficult passage in Livy. To most boys of the Fourth this work would have been impossible. Julian was trying to master it by hard concentration.

Suddenly a knock sounded at the study door.

"Hallo!" he called, looking up sharply. "Who's that?"

There was no reply.

Silence reigned for a little while, so Julian returned to his work. He had scarcely picked up the trend of the passage he was translating when the knock came again. He looked up with an angry frown.

"Who is it?" he exclaimed.

Nobody answered, so he got up from the table, opened the door, and looked out.

He saw Taggles walk across the top of the passage, otherwise nobody was in sight.

Taggles would hardly have knocked like that. Julian frowned, relocked the door, and returned to the table.

He had been at work again for only two minutes when a clamour at the door made him jump.

Bang, bang, bang!

He sprang up, thoroughly angry now, and grasped a cricket-stump. He flung open the door, and looked up and down the corridor.

There was no one to be seen!

Julian gritted his teeth, and went back to the table, leaving the door unlocked. Five minutes passed, and he was beginning to settle down to his task after the interruptions, when the door crashed open and an old cricket-bat was thrown into the room.

Julian dashed to the door; but, as before, he could see no man.

Breathing hard through his nose, he relocked the door and sat down at the table. Again came the knocking on the door, but this time Julian did not answer it.

He knew what it meant. It was a new plot to prevent him from studying. He was not to be allowed to work.

"The cads!" he muttered. "It's no use running up and down the passage trying to find out who is at the bottom of this. They're all in it, I suppose."

Bang! Crash! Thud! went at the door.

Fed-up at last, and unable to work, Julian gathered up his books and papers and left the study.

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He heard several snubbed chuckles as he passed down the corridor, but nobody appeared in view.

He went straight to the Fourth Form room, and settled himself in there at his desk.

But he was not to be left alone for long.

The door opened, and Aubrey Racke walked in, followed by Mellish and Scrope. They grinned at Julian.

"Excuse us interrupting, Julian, but we've come to study the map of the Balkans," said Racke. "Lathom's getting very hot on the Balkans lately, you know!"

Julian did not reply, but remained looking at his books.

He could not concentrate on his task, however.

Racke, Scrope, and Mellish, gathered round the large atlas, argued loudly as to the position of Serbia. It was plain that they had come there on purpose to interrupt Julian at his work. At last Julian could stand it no longer. He gathered up books and papers again, and, without a word to the three young rascals in front, he left the Form-room.

Racke & Co. roared with laughter as he went, and immediately their argument on Serbia finished.

Julian hurried upstairs to the top landing, where the upper box-rooms were situated. He locked himself in No. 3 box-room, and there attempted to resume his studying.

He had not been there long, however, before sounds of a mouth-organ, a tin-whistle, and several combs and paper sounded from the room next door.

There was no recognisable tune in what was being played. It consisted of a variety of loud, blaring noises. It was another phase of an apparently organised plot to prevent him working.

"Oh, the cads! They won't let me alone!" cried Julian, jumping up in sheer desperation. "They mean to stop me from winning the exam. They're out to mess up my studying. I can't bear this!"

With his books once more under his arm, the unhappy lad left the box-room, thrust open the door of the room adjoining, and looked about him angrily.

Racke, Mellish, Scrope, Boulton, Gore, Lumley-Lumley, Bates, Kerruish, and Reilly were seated on boxes, each armed with a noisy instrument, which he was playing for all he was worth.

They stopped blowing when they saw Julian.

"How do you like our orchestra?" asked Kerruish sweetly. "I suppose we do make a bit of a row, but that can't be helped. We've got to practise, you know, and so we came up here, out of the way, to do it."

"You—you rotters!"

Racke gave Julian a sneering look.

"Aren't we allowed up here, Julian?" he asked insolently.

"I suppose you aren't thinking of ordering us down?"

Julian looked round him miserably, realising the utter futility of argument. He left the box-room, followed by jeering laughs and a challenging discord from the juniors' noisy instruments.

He was the helpless victim of his antagonists in the School House—driven from place to place by those who had set themselves against him.

He tried to work in the solitude of the cloisters, but there he was interrupted

by a number of juniors who had come ostensibly to look for a lost football. They walked round him, talking loudly, so that it was utterly impossible for him to set his mind on his books.

Julian left the cloisters, feeling savage and miserable.

Wherever he went he was followed and prevented from studying, and this continued all the evening.

Bed-time came, and Julian had done nothing.

"Nothing—and every minute is valuable to me now!" he said desolately to Jack Blake, meeting him on the stairs before they went up to the dormitory. "The exam comes off very shortly now, and I'm right behind with my studies. Practically everyone is up against me. They mean me to lose the exam."

Blake clenched his fists hard.

"The ignorant rotters!" he exclaimed fiercely. "I wonder you don't let them know the truth, Julian. After all, there's no disgrace in being hard up."

Julian's eyes glittered.

"There is no disgrace, and they will know—they must know, sooner or later," he said. "But I'll beat them if I can! I'll win the exam and then tell them! That will make the decent ones feel ashamed, and it would be revenge on Racke and the other rotters who are helping him stir up feeling against me!"

"You please yourself, Julian, of course," said Blake, giving him a peculiar look. "I must say you're a funny chap, but I admire your pluck."

Julian did not heed the biting remarks that were passed concerning him by his antagonists in the dormitory.

He undressed himself quietly and went to bed.

Kildare saw lights out, and there was no disturbance after he had gone.

Julian lay awake, listening to the school clock as the quarters struck.

Half-past ten—a quarter to eleven!

He sat up in bed and looked round in the gloom.

All was dark and silent in the Fourth Form dormitory.

"Anybody awake?" he asked softly.

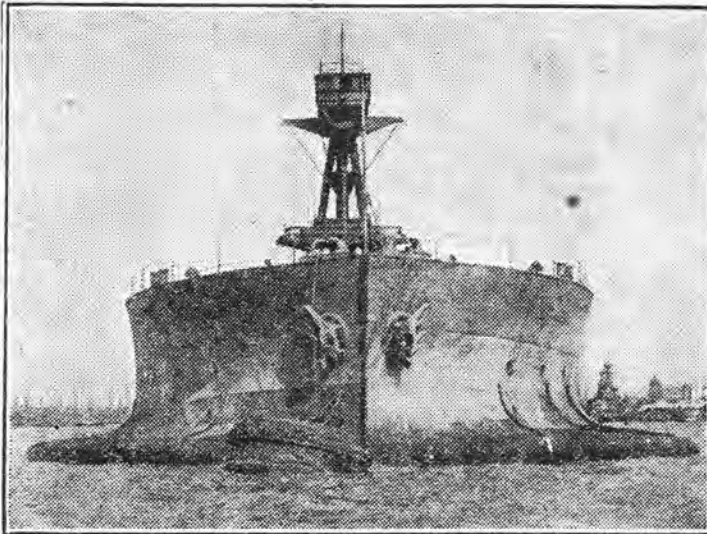
There was no reply.

He slipped out of bed, put on jacket and socks, and walked noiselessly from the room.

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Traversing the dark, quiet corridors with infinite caution, he came at length to his own study downstairs. He went in, locked the door, and switched on the light.

"Now!" he muttered, with a sigh. "The cads won't interrupt me here. If I can't work by day, I'll do it at night, and I shall get through that exam. I'll do it in spite of them. I must!"

He sat down at the table and took out his books.

The hours chimed by from the old clock-tower as the junior sat up studying far into the night.

The first grey streaks of early dawn were breaking through the darkness of the sky, obliterating the stars, when Dick Julian closed his books at last and rose to go. He had worked till his brain could stand the ordeal no longer. He looked up books and papers, switched off the light, and walked slowly back to the dormitory.

He was half asleep when he arrived there, and in making for his own bed he lurched against Levison's.

There was a sharp cry from Levison, who started up in alarm.

"Hallo! Who the dickens is that?"

"Only me—Julian! It's all right, Levison!"

"What are you up to? Have you been out? The door is open. I can feel the draught from here."

"Oh! I—I couldn't have closed it properly."

Julian went back to the door and shut it tight. No sooner did he get back into bed than exhausted Nature asserted itself, and he went fast asleep.

CHAPTER 8.

Struck From the List!

"IT'S a fact, I tell you!"

Baggy Trimble spoke the words quite indignantly in the Common-room after lessons next morning.

Most of the School House juniors were there, discussing footer topics. It was raining outside, and the cosy fire in the Common-room attracted juniors from their studies, where coal was short.

Baggy had a very considerable audience, and a very incredulous one.

Baggy's latest piece of information was, as Blake remarked, rather too much for them to swallow.

"You've been dreaming it, Baggy!" said Monty Lowther.

"The fat idiot must have imagined it!" laughed Tom Merry. "As if it could be true!"

"Well, it is!" almost screeched Baggy. "I heard Dr. Holmes telling Mr. Railton in his study. I happened to be passing, and I thought I saw a sixpence lying down by the door. As I bent down to pick it up I couldn't help hearing—"

"So you've dropped the undone shoelace yarn, Baggy, and altered it to the tale of the lost tanner!" grinned Blake. "But we know you too well, old son! You might as well be straightforward about it and tell us you listened at the keyhole!"

"Really, Blake, as if I would lower myself to listen at a keyhole—"

"Well, you'd hardly do it standing up!" said Monty Lowther; and the others laughed dutifully at his little joke. Baggy did not laugh. He was quite indignant.

"I tell you I overheard it quite by accident!" he screeched. "The Head was telling Railton that somebody had been into his study during the night and got the exam-paper for the Grafton Prize."

"Whew!"

"It's a bit tall, Baggy!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"As if a chap would break into the Head's study in the night and look at the exam-papers!" said Tom Merry. "No one would have the nerve, for one thing. The Head must be mistaken!"

"Well, it's been done," said Baggy. "And the Head hasn't been mistaken. He saw marks round the lock of the drawer in his desk where he keeps the exam-papers, and that made him suspicious. When he examined the papers he found them arranged in a different order from the way he'd left them overnight, so somebody must have been there. The Head was saying something else to Mr. Railton, only I couldn't stop as I saw Mr. Latham coming, and he may have wondered—"

"He would have tumbled to your game at once, Baggy, and licked you as you deserved!" said Tom Merry sharply. "Well, if what you say is true, and the Head has not been mistaken, it looks as if somebody's going to get it in the neck!"

"Yaas, and the wottah, whoever he is, deserves a feahful thwashin'!" said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "I wathah fancy that the culprit, if theah is one, will be found among those who have entailed for the exam."

"Go hon, Gussy!" exclaimed Tom Merry. "Did you think of that all yourself?"

"Yaas, deah boy. I wathah pwide myself on my detective abilities, you know."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Arthur Augustus as an amateur detective had caused hilarity in his schoolfellows on more occasions than one.

"But I wonder who it could have been, anyhow?" said Blake. "I should hardly think a chap would be rotter enough to—"

"I say!" broke in Mellish. "Now I come to think of it, Julian was out of the dorm in the middle of the night."

All eyes were turned on Mellish now.

"That's right," said Mellish. "It must have been jolly late. I woke up and heard someone talking. It was Levison, and he was speaking to Julian, who had just come in and left the dormitory door open. Julian had evidently woke him up."

The juniors in the Common-room were silent and astounded.

The significance of Mellish's statement was only too apparent.

Aubrey Racke broke the silence.

"So Julian was prowling out of the dorm in the middle of the night!" he said, in a voice that made no attempt to disguise his relish of the situation. "Julian's in for the Grafton, isn't he? If the exam-papers have been got at, I don't reckon we shall have to look farther than young Shylock for the culprit!"

At that juncture Levison walked in with Talbot and Gore. He was besieged at once with questions in connection with Mellish's statement.

"Yes, Julian had evidently been out of the dorm last night," said Levison, staring. "He fell against my bed and woke me up. He had forgotten to shut the door properly. The catch isn't working quite right, you know. What's all the excitement about?"

Aubrey Racke explained.

"My hat!" said Gore, his eyes gleaming. "It's a pretty clear case against Julian, isn't it?"

"Rather!" chuckled Racke. "It's just the sort of thing we'd expect from a blessed Jew, anyway!"

"I don't believe it!" cried Tom Merry fiercely. "Julian isn't the sort to cheat like that. Say what you like about him, Julian wouldn't do it any more than I would!"

"Yah!"

"Rats!"

"You're off your rocker, Merry, to stick up for young Shylock!"

Popular opinion was against Dick Julian, and when Kildare looked in and asked for the Jewish lad excitement reigned supreme.

"What's he wanted for, Kildare?" asked Alan Lorne.

"Is it about the exam-papers?" said Mellish.

Kildare gave a quick look round the Common-room.

"Then you kids know about the exam-papers?" he exclaimed.

"Yes, rather!"

The juniors were in a foment now. Kildare would vouchsafe no information, however.

"The Head wants to see Julian at once, that's all I can tell you," said the St. Jim's skipper abruptly. "If any of you kids see him, you might send him along."

"Right-ho, Kildare!"

When Kildare had gone the juniors in the Common-room went also, and on the same errand. They were all eager to find Julian.

"Evidently the Head has a clue—and about Julian!" said Kerruish. "Let's see if we can find him, and see what the blighter says. We shall catch him swotting somewhere on his own, I expect."

"There he goes!" exclaimed Lumley-Lumley, pointing along the corridor. "Kildare's got him!"

Dick Julian and Kildare passed together at the end of the corridor, and a crowd followed them to the Head's study.

The Jewish lad had a look of wonderment on his tired face.

Kildare had mentioned nothing to him concerning the exam papers, so he was totally at a loss to know the cause of the general excitement.

Dr. Holmes, looking stern and awe-inspiring in his cap and gown, was seated at his desk when Kildare led the junior in.

"Ah! So you have found Julian?" The Head's voice was calm and steady. "You may go, Kildare."

The captain left Julian alone with the Head.

Dr. Holmes rose, and fixed a grave look on the junior.

"Can you guess, Julian, my reason in calling you here?" he asked.

Dick Julian shook his head.

"No, sir, unless it is concerning my school fees—"

"It is not that, Julian. I will commence this interview by informing you, then, that last night this room was broken

into the lock on the centre drawer of this desk was picked, and the Grafton examination papers tampered with."

An exclamation of amazement burst from the junior's lips. Dr. Holmes was watching him closely.

"Do you know anything about that, Julian?"

Dick Julian started.

"I, sir? Of course not, sir!"

"Is that the truth, Julian?"

"Absolutely, sir!" replied the junior, looking Dr. Holmes straight and frankly in the eyes.

"Were you out of your dormitory at all last night?" was the Head's next grave question.

Dick Julian's face paled. He remained silent, unable for the moment to speak.

"I am waiting for an answer, Julian."

"I—I did leave the dormitory last night, sir," said Julian, setting his teeth.

"Where did you go?"

"To my own study, sir."

"How long were you there, Julian?"

"About five hours, sir," replied the Fourth-Former.

"Julian, this is not an occasion for joking!" rapped Dr. Holmes angrily.

Dick Julian smiled wanly.

"I am not joking, sir," he said. "I was up for about five hours during last night. I went to my study to do some work—to prepare for the Grafton exam. I hadn't done any studying during the day, so I thought I would make up for lost time during the night."

"Bless my soul! That is most extraordinary!" exclaimed the Head. "Did you come to this room at all during the night, Julian?"

"No, sir," said Dick.

Dr. Holmes gravely took up a small torn fragment of paper and handed it to the junior.

"Do you recognise that, Julian?"

Dick looked at it and started. It was a scrap of impot paper, such as he had been using for his notes, and on it were Latin words in his own handwriting.

"Well?" The Head's voice was now louder and more ominous.

"It—it evidently belongs to me, sir," said Julian.

"It would be futile for you to deny that," said the Head.

"I found that on the carpet in this room this morning, Julian, down by my desk. How can you account for its being there?"

Julian turned white. He looked incredulously at Dr. Holmes.

"You—you found it here, sir?" he stammered. "I—But it's impossible! I have not been here, sir!"

"It appears to me that the sheet of paper to which this scrap belongs became caught, somehow, in the drawer containing the examination papers when it was shut," said the Head quietly. "It had evidently been laid down by the papers for the purpose of comparison, and this torn part had probably dropped unnoticed to the floor. What have you to say in explanation, Julian?"

Dick's heart beat wildly. Something seemed to be clutching at his throat.

"I know nothing about it, sir!" he cried hoarsely. "I did not come into this room last night. I have not seen the examination papers! I swear I am not the one who came here!"

"That is very difficult for me to believe, Julian, in face of the circumstances. I had never regarded you as a lad who would willingly perform a dishonest action, but in this case you may have had some provocation. I understand that your allowance from home has been discontinued, and presume that your principal reason—I might say the sole reason—for your entering for the Grafton was to secure the money prize in order to maintain your position at this school?"

"I wanted the money to pay my school fees, sir," replied Julian fiercely. "My father cannot afford to pay them, and they are now overdue. I do not want to leave St. Jim's, so I decided to win the Grafton and pay for my own keep here."

"I admire and respect your motive, Julian," said the Head a little more kindly, "but that, to make certain of winning, you should steal in here at night and break open my desk—"

"That's not true! I didn't, sir!" cried the junior. "You have no proof—"

"Kildare is now searching for proof," said Dr. Holmes. "I instructed him to look in your study whilst you were in here for the page from which this fragment has been torn. Ah, here is Kildare!"

A rap sounded at the door, and in answer to Dr. Holmes' response Kildare walked in. He held a piece of burnt paper in his hand.

"Well, Kildare?" said the Head.

"I think that this is all that remains of the sheet I was

looking for, sir," said Kildare, extending the burnt fragment. "I went to Julian's study after leaving here, and discovered the ashes of a recently-burnt piece of paper in the fender. There is no fire in the study, and it seems that a match was used to set light to the paper. The match was in the fender near the ashes. The paper was not entirely burnt, and this is what I picked out of the ashes."

Dr. Holmes examined the paper which Kildare had given him.

Writing in Latin, and in Julian's hand, was plainly discernible, despite the charred condition of the paper. Dr. Holmes' face set grimly, and when Kildare had gone he turned with a condemning look to Julian, showing him the burnt paper.

"This appears to be from the identical passage from Livy as the writing on this other scrap of paper," he said. "So, Julian, you anticipated that a search would be made for the torn sheet, and you took the precaution of burning it in your study this morning?"

Julian, almost dazed by the amazing turn events had taken, gave a choked cry.

"I know nothing of it, sir! I haven't been in my study since a few minutes after breakfast! I haven't burnt any paper in the room, and I am innocent—absolutely innocent—of this affair!"

Dr. Holmes laid down the paper on his desk. His usually kind old face was hard and set sternly.

"Julian, I should like to be able to believe you, but the circumstances point so plainly to your guilt," he said. "No doubt you acted in the stress of great desperation, but that does not mitigate the seriousness of the offence. It is a cowardly and despicable means of gaining an advantage over your fellow-contestants for the prize."

"But I am innocent, sir!" cried Dick. "There must be some horrible mistake! I know nothing at all about the affair!"

"Do not seek to shield yourself by subterfuge, Julian," exclaimed Dr. Holmes. "I am convinced of your guilt, but am willing to take a lenient view of your act. Were it not for the circumstances I should expel you, or give you a public flogging. As it is, you shall be debarred from competing in the examination."

"Oh, sir! I don't deserve it! I am innocent!"

"I have acquainted you with my decision, Julian. Kindly leave the study at once."

"But, sir—"

Dr. Holmes pointed to the door.

"Not another word, Julian!" he said sternly. "I am ashamed that a junior of my school should stoop to so base a trick. Your name shall be struck off the list immediately. Now go!"

Dick's brain was in a whirl as he staggered rather than walked to the door. He was hardly able to realise the calamity that had befallen him, he could not understand the cruel fate that had so suddenly woven this tragic web of circumstance about him.

Juniors were crowded in the corridor outside.

Dick Julian walked from the Head's study looking utterly crushed and broken.

"So the Head's bowled you out, Shylock!" said Racka insolently.

"Yah! Cheat!" hissed a score of voices.

There would have been a scene, but Dr. Holmes appearing from his study had the effect of quieting the juniors.

The Head walked into the Hall, and he was seen to go to the notice-board. When he had passed on the juniors ran over to the board and looked at it.

Monty Lowther gave a low whistle.

"Whew! So it's a fact about Julian, then! The Head's just crossed out his name from the Grafton list."

The list of entrants for the Grafton prize was in the centre of the board. Through one name the Head had drawn a thick blue pencil line. That name was Richard Julian's!

CHAPTER 9.

Dick Julian's Pluck!

CHEAT!

The whole school called him by that name.

The news spread that Julian had been struck off the Grafton prize list for stealing a look at the examination papers in the middle of the night. There was no evidence in Julian's favour—nothing but his own impassioned declaration of innocence. And what was the word of a Jew worth?

He was cut on all sides, jeered at and condemned wherever he went. Tom Merry and Blake avoided him even. They were plainly troubled over the affair, and they did not know what to think. They liked Julian, and believed him to be above the actions of a common cheat. They found it difficult to convince themselves that the accusation against Julian was true, and yet what explanation could the junior



Crooke rose from his seat and the Head glanced at him over the rims of his glasses. "Well, Crooke?" he asked. Gerald Crooke licked his dry lips, conscious of the many eyes gazing at him. "I—I have something to say, sir," he muttered. "I cannot go on with the exam. I—I am a cheat!" Everyone in the room was taken aback at Crooke's words. "It's true, sir," went on the Shell fellow. "It was I who went to your room the other night and looked at the papers, not Julian! He's innocent!" (See page 21.)

give? Dick Julian had no explanation—there was no redeeming feature of the evidence to even suggest his innocence.

So he became known as the Cheat. The name stung him worse than any other that had been flung at him. Fags in the Third called after him. Fellows in his own Form and in the Shell hardly spoke to him at all, and when they did they addressed him as Cheat. Even seniors shunned him.

Two days passed—two days of tragic suffering to the condemned lad. He came in through the gates at tea-time after a walk to the village. Kerruish, Reilly, Cardew, Levison, and Lumley-Lumley were chatting on the drive. They pointedly ignored Julian as he came by. The outcast junior, all the anger and suffering of the past days welling up suddenly in him, swung round upon them.

"You cads!" he exclaimed passionately.

"Faith, and I——"

"Shut up, Reilly!" muttered Kerruish.

"Sure, but——"

"Don't speak to the cheat! He's barred!"

"That's right, begorrah! Julian, ye spalpeen, ye can go on! I'm not spakin' to ye at all, at all!"

"You chump!" growled Kerruish, and the others had to laugh.

Julian's face was crimson.

"So you're keeping this up?" he exclaimed bitterly. "You won't give a fellow the benefit of the doubt? I——"

"There isn't any doubt!" growled Kerruish, as if ashamed of himself for speaking to his old study-mate. "You're a cheat!"

He and the others turned away.

Dick Julian bit his lip. A low moan escaped him, but the others did not hear it. He hurried away indoors, shunned by all he met. He went to Study No. 5, the room that had

been left exclusively to him these past few days, and flung himself into the armchair.

He was at the limit of his endurance now. He felt that he could bear his humiliation no longer.

"What's the use of hanging on now?" he muttered brokenly. "I'm not wanted. I cannot get proof of my innocence. Nobody will believe me. They won't even listen to me. I'm barred from winning the Grafton, so what is the use? I've nothing to stay here for, and soon I shall have to leave. Why should I prolong the agony? I'd better go. They'd all be glad to see the back of me. Yes, I shall have to clear out sooner or later. I've got to clear out, and the sooner the better."

Bed-time came, and Julian went upstairs to bed.

There was a new, hard glitter in his eyes, and his jaws were grimly set as with a definite purpose. Dick Julian, driven to the wall, scorned and despised by the whole school, had made up his mind. He would leave St. Jim's and end it all. He had packed his things secretly. He had determined to go that night and catch the fast midnight train from Wayland to London.

He got into bed, apparently unnoticed. He lay there sullenly, listening to the merry chatter of the others, until they, one by one, fell off to sleep.

At last quiet and stillness reigned in the dark dormitory.

Eleven boomed from the clock-tower, and Julian left his bed.

He dressed hurriedly, and, with a last tragic look at the sleeping dormitory in the moonlight, he left it, and crept downstairs for his bag.

He found it where he had left it in his study, and made his way cautiously through the corridors until he reached the lower box-room. He opened the window softly, lowered his

bag, and then dropped it. It struck the ground with a thud. Then he climbed out, and, having closed the window again, leaped to the ground.

Two minutes later, Julian, bag in hand, was speeding through the dark night shadows across the quadrangle and into the Close.

He gained the top of the school wall from the old oak, used by generations of juniors for bounds-breaking purposes. One jump and he was over—out in the Rylcombe lane. He picked up his bag and walked on down the lane.

As he passed the gates he looked through at the grand old slumbering pile of St. Jim's. Not a light glimmered anywhere, but the moon bathed the school in mellow radiance.

There was a lump in Dick Julian's throat as he turned his gaze towards the lowering shadows ahead, and plunged on. He had no thoughts of turning back. He was not wanted at St. Jim's, and he had no right to be there, as his fees were not paid. But he loved the place and the people in it, and he felt that his heart strings were being torn at leaving.

He had a long walk to Wayland ahead of him, there being no conveyance from Rylcombe at that time of night.

He struck off through the wood at the old stile, and took the path that led to the river. It was now half-past eleven. He had taken longer than he had anticipated in leaving the school. He quickened his pace to make sure of reaching Wayland Station by midnight.

At length there came to his ears the busy rippling of the Rhyl through the trees, and presently he reached the moonlit waters, and took the path along the bank.

Nestling among trees a short distance ahead was a little house, many of its windows lit up. It was the Green Man public-house, the notorious haunt of the local wastrels and harpies, and, unbeknown to the authorities, of several St. Jim's fellows.

The moon had now disappeared behind a bank of black clouds, and all was dark and very still. Julian, as he tramped nearer the Green Man, wondered whether there were any St. Jim's fellows there—Knox of the Sixth or Cutts, perhaps.

Men's voices could now be heard coming from inside the bar-parlour of the public-house—rough, burly voices raised in drunken articulation.

All of a sudden a commotion disturbed the night stillness.

The door of the bar-parlour came open with a crash, and a fierce scuffle sounded. Halting, and looking in that direction, Julian saw two St. Jim's fellows fighting their way through the doorway.

The pair were being assailed by three men, whose rough voices reached the watching junior in the shadows.

"Smash the little whelps!"

A cry of pain rang out, and Julian saw one of the men fell the junior nearest him with a cruel blow. As the boy fell his assailant and another of the rascals piled upon him, leaving the other St. Jim's boy to fight with the remaining hulking ruffian.

It was a grossly unfair fight, and Dick Julian's blood boiled.

"The cads! They'll do those two some injury!" he exclaimed, dropping his bag and starting to run towards the wicket-gate.

The moon came out then, and in its light Julian saw that the two victims were Aubrey Racke and Crooke.

His two greatest enemies at the school!

It was Crooke who had been felled, and who was in the hands of the two rascals. Racke, fighting desperately, was backing towards the gate. Crooke managed to stagger to his feet, and, in a seeming dazed condition, he gained Racke's side.

"Out 'em!" snarled one of the brutal attackers. "We'll give 'em lip! They wants a good 'iding, and they shall 'ave it!"

The three rushed on Crooke and Racke with renewed fierceness. The two juniors were completely at the mercy of their assailants, and were being beaten terribly.

Dick Julian took in the position in one swift glance. He did not stop or even falter. With fists clenched tight and raised for action he dashed to the aid of Racke and Crooke.

He reached their side and sent the man nearest him reeling back with a terrific upper-cut.

Savage oaths escaped the rascals at the intervention. Racke and Crooke were gasping.

"Keep them back, Julian! They mean to half murder us, and I—I'm done!"

Gerald Crooke, gasping out these words, staggered against the gate and fell in a huddled heap. The punishment he had received at the hands of the bar-parlour gang had proved too much for Crooke, tough as he was. He had borne by far the worst of the encounter so far.

The three men gave brutal laughs and pressed on. They would have seized the junior, helpless as he was, and subjected him to further violence, but Dick Julian sprang in the way.

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"Get back, you hounds!" he cried. "Where's your sense of fair play? Take that, you rotter!"

"That" was a smashing right-hander which caught one of the men full on his stubby chin. He gave a dismal howl and fell back.

Julian turned to Aubrey Racke.

"Back up, Racke!" he exclaimed. "We've got to get Crooke out of this. He's done for. I—Oh, you coward! Come back!"

Racke, taking advantage of Julian's intervention, sprang through the gateway, and ran off, leaving Julian to fight the three scoundrels alone.

British, triumphant laughs arose from the three.

"Let Master Racke go! We'll 'ave this young bantam now!"

"You won't, you hounds!" rapped the Jewish junior, in a ringing voice.

He stood in front of Crooke to defend him. The burly Shell fellow was writhing and moaning in the gateway, helpless. Unless Julian managed to stave off the brutes things would go very hard indeed with Crooke.

Julian squared his shoulders and faced the three as they made a simultaneous rush at him.

Left and right went out as quick as a flash, the left sending one man reeling back against his companion, and the right landing full between the other rascal's eyes.

Julian sprang then to the attack, hitting out grimly to right and left. One boy against three men. The odds seemed impossible. But Julian knew how to use his fists. He was quick and alert, whereas the three men were clumsy and befuddled. Julian drove them with his fists back towards the open bar-parlour doorway.

Crooke was sitting up now, watching Julian in amazed wonderment.

"Get out, Crooke, if you can!" cried Julian. "I'll keep these cads off while you escape!"

Fuming wildly, the three men closed round the plucky junior. Julian sprang back, still fighting gamely. Crooke was dragging himself through the gateway.

"You sha'n't get him, you rascals!" panted Julian, barring the path.

He landed a series of smashing blows that had the full weight of his body behind them.

The three miscreants yelped.

"Ow-wow-wow!"

"Old 'im!"

Crooke was out, now, and was staggering into the shadows.

Julian gave ground, but very slowly. As the three rascals surged forward again at the gate, the sleek form of Mr. Banks appeared in the bar parlour doorway.

He rapped out orders to the three, who immediately dropped their hands and slouched back into the house.

Mr. Banks, evidently afraid of attracting attention to his establishment, then closed the door, and Julian was left alone, panting and breathless.

He had not escaped unscathed. His head arched under the reaction of the cruel, smashing blows he had received.

"Julian!"

Crooke was at his elbow.

The Shell fellow had staggered towards him, and Julian, looking at him, saw that he could hardly stand.

"Help me, Julian—to get back to St. Jim's," muttered Crooke hoarsely. "Those cads set about me in there, and I—I'm done! Oh, my head!"

Crooke lurched forward, and Julian was just in time to catch him. He looked round for Racke, but of the rascally Shell fellow there was no sign.

Racke, deeming discretion to be the better part of valour, had left Crooke in the lurch, to save his own skin.

Crooke, gasping for breath and helpless, was leaning heavily on Julian.

"If I am found out, it will mean the sack for me!" he moaned. "Help me, Julian—before those cads come out again."

Julian set his teeth.

Crooke was his enemy—there was no reason why Julian should help him. Crooke knew that, too, and he looked at Julian, half in appeal, half in fright.

"I'll help you, Crooke," said Julian, in a low, even voice. "Lean on me. We'll go this way. I've left my bag a little way down the path."

They moved off slowly. Julian reached the spot where he had left his bag. He picked it up and walked on, supporting Crooke with his free arm.

The Shell fellow looked curiously at him.

"What were you doing out at this time, Julian—with your bag?"

"I was running away from school," replied the Jewish lad quietly. "I am not wanted at St. Jim's now. I'm accused of being a cheat, and I cannot prove my innocence. I shall have to leave soon in any case, so I took my leave at eleven to-night."

"Good heavens!" muttered Crooke.

"You ought to thank your lucky stars I happened to come along when I did, Crooke!" said Julian grimly. "Those beasts would have done for you!"

"I know," said Crooke hoarsely. "Racke and I happened to win some money to-night from them, and they accused us of cheating. That started the row."

The two juniors trudged on in silence, until St. Jim's was reached.

Julian helped his enemy over the school wall, and clambered to the other side with him.

"Will you manage to get in alone now, Crooke?" he asked.

Crooke gave him a quick glance.

"Aren't you coming in, Julian?"

"No," said the Fourth-Former, between his teeth. "I'm going right away. St. Jim's shan't see me again."

Crooke with an impulsive movement, clutched his arm.

"Julian!" There was a catch in Crooke's voice which Julian had never heard before. "Don't go, Julian! I—I can prove your innocence!"

Dick started and looked the Shell fellow full in the face.

"You can prove my innocence?" he exclaimed.

"Yes," said Crooke hoarsely. "I can—and I will clear you, Julian. You've been decent to me to-night, and you've made me feel what a rotter I am. I can't let you run away and suffer—if you leave it to me, I'll put things right!"

"Tell me how," said Julian eagerly. "What is the truth about the exam paper business, Crooke?"

"You'll know to-morrow," was Crooke's quiet reply. "Fetch your bag and get back to bed. I'll promise, honour bright, to get things straight in the morning."

Julian looked hard at Crooke. The bully of the Shell was showing a side of his nature which Julian had never suspected.

"Help me back, Julian—my foot is bad, and my head is swimming," muttered Crooke. "I—I'll make it up to you."

The Jewish lad nodded.

He realised that, after all, it would be better for him to remain at St. Jim's now. He would never catch the train at Wayland, so that if he did leave he would have to stay out in the open all night.

After all, another day would not matter.

Crooke might not keep his word—nobody at St. Jim's would think of trusting him; but Julian could just as easily run away the next day if he still wished.

"All right, Crooke," he said. "I'll help you in and see you right through."

He almost lifted Crooke through the box-room window, and took him upstairs to the bath-room where, in the eerie stillness of the night, both juniors bathed their wounds.

They crept downstairs together.

Julian accompanied Crooke to the door of the Shell dormitory.

"I'm all right now, Julian," said the bully, and there was a queer throb in his voice. "You're a brick to have helped me like this. I—I'm sorry I've been down on you. I'll make things all right in the morning."

Julian left him and took his bag back to his study. Then he crept to the Fourth Form dormitory. All was dark and still as he stole inside. This time he made no mistake about the door. He undressed and got into bed without disturbing anyone.

Dick Julian had not expected to return to that bed—not that night, at any rate. He could not repress a slight, bitter smile as he lay there gazing at the moonlight through the window.

He felt little the worse for his night adventure. His mind dwelt on Gerald Crooke and his amazing change of demeanour. Was there anything in what Crooke had said? Could it be possible that the Shell fellow held the clue to Julian's innocence?

It was long before the Jewish lad settled himself to sleep, wondering what would happen on the morrow.

CHAPTER 10.

The Truth at Last.

"EXAM takes place this morning," said Alan Lorne. "Oh crumbs, I'm not looking forward to it a bit!" Lorne was one of the entrants. He was not over sanguine of success, and did not mind admitting that fact.

"The swot's hardly worth the twenty quid, even if you do happen to win it," he said. "I shall be glad when it's over. I get a couple of quid from my pater, anyway, if I net a reasonable number of marks."

Julian did not speak to anyone that morning, and nobody spoke to him. He was, as usual, shunned.

He looked at Crooke several times at breakfast, but the bary Shell fellow gave no sign.

Both he and Racke showed evidence of their previous

night's adventure, and were called to account by Mr. Linton for fighting. Racke, lying glibly, said that he and Crooke had been fighting together, and Crooke assented to this. Each was given a hundred lines.

The Shell and Fourth assembled in the lecture-room together that morning for the exam. The boys who were taking the exam sat together on one side of the room, whilst those for lessons sat on the other side.

Dick Julian took his place with the Fourth on the classes side, having been barred from entering the exam. Crooke was on the opposite side of the room, among those who were taking the exam.

Julian kept glancing at him. Crooke seemed strangely quiet and subdued, but when he did meet Julian's glance he looked away. Would Crooke keep his word? Was he able to prove Julian's innocence? Or had he lied last night—had his words simply been a cunning ruse to impel Julian to see him right through safely to the dormitory?

Dr. Holmes and Mr. Linton came into the room together, the Head with his sheaf of examination papers in his hand.

He took his seat at the desk and called over the list of exam entrants one by one.

Dr. Holmes had read out the last name, and was sorting out the papers, when Gerald Crooke rose at his desk.

The Head glanced over the rim of his spectacles.

"Well, Crooke?" he asked.

Gerald Crooke licked his dry lips, conscious of the many eyes that were staring hard at him.

"I—I have something to say, sir," he stuttered. "I cannot go on with the exam. I—I am a cheat!"

"Crooke!"

Everyone in the room was taken aback at Crooke's words. "It's true, sir," went on the Shell fellow, his head lowered and eyes cast to the ground. "It was I who went to your room the other night and looked at the papers, not Julian! He is innocent!"

"Bless my soul!" ejaculated the Head.

A tumult of excited voices arose, which Mr. Linton, in a solemn voice, quelled.

Dr. Holmes looked hard and steadily at Crooke.

"Do you confess, then, Crooke, that you were solely responsible for the dishonourable act for which Julian has been condemned?"

"Yes, sir," muttered Crooke. "He knew nothing about it. I—I'll explain everything."

"Please go on, Crooke."

"I—I wanted to win the exam, sir. I set my mind on winning it. I knew you had the exam papers in that drawer, and that night I came up here to look at them. I had some of Julian's notes on Livy with me."

"How did you procure those, Crooke?" asked the Head sternly.

"I got them in a raid on Julian's study, sir," replied Crooke. "His books and papers were supposed to have been burnt, but I saw these notes in the Latin grammar, and, thinking that they would be useful to me, I took them. That is how that paper came to be in your study, sir."

The juniors looked in amazement at Crooke.

Julian's face was flushed, his heart throbbing with joy. Crooke was keeping his word. The explanation was so simple.

"The remains of the paper were found in Julian's study, burnt," said the Head. "What explanation have you to give of that, Crooke?"

"I burnt the paper there, sir," said Crooke. "I realised in the morning that a search would probably be made for it, so I went to Julian's study to put it in his desk. When I got there I couldn't—I hadn't got the pluck to carry out my plan. I knew that if the torn piece was found Julian would be accused, so there was no need for me to plant the paper back on him. So I put a match to it and burnt it in the fender."

"Oh!" said Dick Julian, heaving a deep, deep sigh of relief.

Crooke hung his head under the gaze of Dr. Holmes, Mr. Linton, and his schoolfellows.

Dr. Holmes' voice was tremulous with emotion when he spoke.

"Crooke, I am glad that your conscience made you confess at the last moment," he said. "You have done Julian a terrible wrong by allowing your guilt to fall on his shoulders. This confession is the one redeeming feature that will make all the difference. I shall deal with you as I did with Julian. The papers had been altered, naturally, but you will not be allowed to take part in this examination."

Crooke did not reply.

Blake broke into the silence with a cheer.

"Hurrah! Good old Julian! He's true blue, after all!"

"Yaas, wathah!" exclaimed D'Arcy. "We all owe him an apology, dear boys, for the wotten way we have treated him lately."

There was hardly a boy in the room who did not look ashamed.

Racke, Mellish, and Scrope were astounded and perplexed at Crooke's action. It was the last thing they would have expected from him.

"Silence, boys!" said the Head kindly. "Julian, will you stand up?"

Dick Julian, his face radiant, rose at his desk.

"Julian, I am sorry that you have been wronged, and am more glad than I can say that your innocence has been established. I did not like to think of you as a dishonest lad—you had always impressed me as being entirely the opposite. You may, of course, sit for the examination now, if you wish."

Dick's eyes were moist, and there was a catch in his voice as he replied:

"Thank you, sir! I—I want to take the exam."

"Then you will change places with Crooke."

Crooke changed without a word; but Julian flung him a friendly, grateful look in passing.

The morning wore on, the air in the lecture-room charged with tense excitement. Crooke hardly looked up from his desk all the morning. The boys taking the exam worked hard, and Julian, despite the set-back he had received, toiled harder than them all.

When at last the exam was over and class was dismissed the juniors trooped eagerly out of the lecture-room.

Crooke and Julian became the centre of an excited, curious crowd.

Kerruish was the first to extend his hand to Dick Julian. "I'm sorry, old man, for the way I've treated you," he said huskily. "Can you forgive us?"

"Yes, of course," replied the Jewish lad quietly and fervently. "You were silly asses, but you did not know. I do not blame you."

Boys crowded round eagerly to beg Julian's pardon.

The junior's handsome, pallid face was radiant with a new happiness. It seemed that the event of the morning had given him a fresh lease of life.

"I will explain to you fellows now the reason of my apparent meanness and my object in entering for the exam," he said. "My people are ruined, and I am as poor as a church mouse. I could not spend money because I had none to spend. All I had I sent back home. My school fees are not even paid—and it was to raise the money to pay them that I went in for the exam."

"Oh, my hat! What cads we've been!" exclaimed Kerruish. "Why on earth didn't you tell us before, Julian?"

The Jewish lad smiled slightly.

"I was too proud, and I was angry at the way I had been treated," he said. "I bore you no ill-feeling, but the name Shylock stuck in me, and I determined to keep my secret until I had won—and make you ashamed."

"Bai Jove!"

The juniors looked abashed at each other.

"Julian, old chap, we're sorry—downright sorry!" said Monty Lowther. "We've been fools and cads, and I, for one, could kick myself. You may kick me if you like—and as hard as you jolly well like."

Dick Julian laughed—his first laugh for days.

Crooke walked away, and the fellows let him pass.

The burly Shell fellow was not condemned. Tom Merry & Co., on the contrary, admired him for his courage in confessing. It was a redeeming streak in Crooke's make-up which they had not suspected.

The Terrible Three and the chums of Study No. 6 went along with Julian to Study No. 10. They were surprised, on arriving there, to find Gerald Crooke waiting for them.

The bully's face was white and haggard.

"I've come to tell you that it's all up with me here, Merry," he said hoarsely. "I'm expecting Banks or one of his men to come to the Head any minute now—to expose me."

"Great pip!"

"I owe Banks at the Green Man a lot of money; that is why I entered for the Grafton. If I had won, I should have paid him. Otherwise, I should have to go from St. Jim's. I'm going now. I got into a row with Banks at the Green Man last night. Julian got me out of it—he stood by me, although I had been a cad to him. Banks will get me the sack now; you know what a revengeful hound he is. He has some IO-U's of mine."

The others looked serious.

"I'm sorry, Crooke," said Tom Merry, "but—"

"I know what you're going to say!" cut in Crooke bitterly. "It is my own fault. Don't I know it only too well! I'm in the cart now, and I shall have to put up with it. Nothing can save me. Directly the Head hears of my dealings with that crowd at the Green Man I shall be kicked out of the school."

"It's rotten, Cwooke. What are you goin' to do?"

"I shall clear off before I'm kicked out!" said Crooke. "I

thought I'd tell you chaps first; it will make me easier in mind when I am gone—"

"Don't be a coward, Crooke!" Tom Merry rapped the words sharply. "You're not a coward at heart—you proved that this morning—and you ought to stay and face the music, if it comes. But we'll do our best to stave it off. We'll go down to the Green Man at once and see Banks."

An eager light leaped into Crooke's sallow face.

"You will? You'll do that for me, Merry?"

The Shell captain nodded.

"Yes, we'll talk to Banks, and perhaps we shall be able to compromise with the rotter," he said. "Are you other chaps willing to come?"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"We'll all go, Tommy!"

Crooke drew a deep breath.

"I—I'm deeply grateful to you chaps," he muttered. "If you do get me out of this I shall try to keep straight in the future."

"All right," said Tom briskly. "You stay here, Crooke. We'll run down to the Green Man now before it's too late."

And, taking their caps, the chums of the School House hurried out of doors. They left Crooke pacing up and down Study No. 10, his heart chafing with anxiety. Would Tom Merry & Co. be able to stave off Banks' vengeance? Was it possible that they could persuade the rascal to stay his hand?

Crooke groaned in very anguish of spirit. On the face of it, Tom Merry's task seemed impossible.

They did not know Banks as well as Crooke knew him. Banks was unscrupulous, malevolent—a bitter enemy. He would probably not listen to the juniors, but have them turned away from his inn. The miserable Shell fellow saw no hope now. The crash—his disgrace and expulsion from St. Jim's—must surely come; it seemed inevitable.

CHAPTER 11.

For Crooke's Sake!

"GOOD-ARTERNOON, young gents!"

A seedy-looking, disreputable person slouched in the school gateway just as Tom Merry & Co. were going out.

They recognised the newcomer as Joe Lodgey, one of the pub-baunters of the village and a habitue of the Green Man. They had had their rubs with Joe Lodgey many a time in the past.

Lodgey wore a knowing look. He raised his battered bowler hat in affable greeting.

Tom Merry & Co. exchanged glances.

"What do you want here?" rapped Tom sharply.

"Ah!" said Lodgey, with a knowing wink. "That's tellin'! Which your respected 'eadmaster don't 'appen to be knocking around, does 'e, young gents?"

"Bai Jove! He wants to see the Head, deah boys!"

"You've come from Banks of the Green Man?" asked Tom.

"I may 'ave come on a errand for Mister Banks, and, on the other 'and, I may 'ave not!" said Joe Lodgey, with a hiccup. "Hi, wot's the game?"

The juniors, at a signal from Tom Merry, closed round on Mr. Lodgey. That gentleman blinked in alarm and backed away into the road.

"Look 'ere, Mister Banks said as 'ow if I woz hinterfered with—"

"You can't come in here!" said Tom Merry shortly, looking straight into Mr. Lodgey's fishy eyes. "Run away!"

"My heye! Which Hi've got a message to deliver—"

"You can't deliver anything here! Take yourself off!"

Mr. Lodgey blinked indignantly at the juniors. All gave him threatening looks. Suddenly he made a dive for the gateway, but Blake and Lowther were too quick for him. They grasped Mr. Lodgey and swung him round.

"Yaroooooogh!" wailed Lodgey. "'Ands hoff! Hi'm goin' in!"

"Your mistake, you rotter—you're going out!" said Tom grimly. "Chuck him into the road, kids!"

"What-ho!"

Mr. Lodgey, yelling and protesting wildly, was raised on high and hurled into the middle of the road. He collapsed there in a heap, moaning.

"There!" said Tom Merry. "Let that warn you to keep away from here! You can go back to Banks and tell him there's no admittance!"

"Ow! Wow! My heye! Groooooogh!"

Mr. Lodgey groped for his battered bowler, deposited it on his head, and blinked round dolefully.

"If that chap isn't gone from there in three seconds," said Tom Merry, "we'll jump on him. Now, one—two—three—"

"Yaroooooogh! 'Elp! Gerraway! Ow-wowow!"

Mr. Lodgey jumped up like a very alert jack-in-the-box. He streaked down the lane at top speed, yelling, and

disappeared from view round the bend. Tom Merry & Co. grinned.

"That's got rid of that rotter, anyway!" said Tom. "He's evidently run back to Banks. We'll be after Banks now ourselves. Come on, there's no time to be lost!"

"Wathah not, deah boy!"

The juniors hurried on down the lane and through the wood until they came to the Green Man.

They stood in the trees opposite, and hesitated.

They shrank from the thought of entering the place—to face the hostile looks and ribald laughter of the disreputable gang that congregated there. The Green Man was the worst place in Rylcombe, and bore little resemblance to the usual type of village inn where labourers and villagers gathered. The place was the resort of all the blackguards in the neighbourhood, and to enter there was not a pleasant task. But Crooke was in danger of ruin and disgrace; they must help him if they could.

At a word from Tom Merry they strode in firmly. They did not enter the public doors, but walked through the wicket gate and knocked at the bar-parlour door. Tom knew that the bar parlour was the room where Banks and his special friends gathered.

The door opened, and the coarse face of Abel Jolliffe—one of Banks' touts—showed itself.

"My word!" said Jolliffe, on seeing the St. Jim's fellows. "I thought it woz Joe! I—Ow!"

He found himself being roughly pushed aside. Tom Merry & Co. did not stand upon ceremony. They hurried on into the bar-parlour.

The place was hazy with tobacco fumes, and it reeked of spirits.

Banks and another man were seated at the table, and before them was spread a sheet of velvet, on which a glittering array of jewels and a gold watch were displayed.

Banks and his companion jumped up with oaths on the St. Jim's juniors' precipitate entry. It was evident that they had not expected that intrusion. As Jolliffe had said, the knock on the door had been taken for Joe Lodgey returning.

Banks snatched at the velvet cloth, but Tom Merry was quicker.

The Shell captain, with a deft movement, sprang to the table and caught up the pile of valuables almost out of Banks' hands.

"Leave those alone!" screeched the rascally landlord, his face livid. "You interfeerin' little scoundrels!"

"Jolly lucky we came in just then, chaps!" exclaimed Tom. "This stuff is stolen property—I knew it directly I clapped eyes on it! There's a full description of the jewellery posted outside Rylcombe police station; we were reading it only yesterday, you remember."

"My hat! So we were!" exclaimed Blake, with a quick breath.

Banks and his two companions made as if to attack Tom, but he stepped back among his chums, and they all presented such a menacing front that the rascals held back.

"Look 'ere, young gents, you're mistaken!" said Banks, with an effort to compose himself. "This gentleman 'ere is a jeweller, and 'e 'as just brought these to show me—"

"They are stolen property!" rapped Tom sharply. "And if—Look at this watch, you fellows! Do you recognise it?"

Tom held up the watch for inspection.

The juniors uttered exclamations of amazement.

"Bai Jove! That's Wacke's gold tickah!" exclaimed D'Arcy.

"Yes, it's Racke's watch right enough—nobody could mistake that!" said Manners. "You remember how he swanked about it when his father sent it to him. It was supposed to have cost quids and quids."

"It's certainly a valuable watch—that's how we come to recognise it," said Tom Merry quietly. "I wonder how it got into this place?"

"I think I guess," said Julian. "Racke was here with Crooke last night. There was a rough and tumble, and in the scuffle I reckon one of the rascals must have relieved Racke of his watch."

Banks' face was livid. He was like an animal at bay. Jolliffe covered back against the table, whilst the third man crouched by the fireplace, furtively gnawing his cigar, which had gone out.

There was a step outside, and a tap at the door. Digby opened it, and Aubrey Racke came in. He fell back on seeing the others.

"Good heavens!" he muttered. "You—you here?"

"Come right in, Racke!" said Tom Merry, with a laugh. He was completely master of the situation now. Racke walked into the bar-parlour and Digby closed the door. "I suppose," went on Tom, "you have called about your watch?"

Again Racke started.

"Then you know?" he exclaimed.

"We've got it!" replied Tom, keeping a wary eye on Banks, who seemed likely to spring on him at any moment.

"You missed it when you got back last night, I suppose. Racke, and knew where you had lost it—that's why you didn't mention the loss at St. Jim's."

Racke nodded.

"You've guessed it, Merry," he said coolly. "I'm obliged to you for recovering it for me. May I have it?"

"Here, you rotter!"

Racke took his watch with a grin, and left the place.

Tom Merry, maintaining his hold of the other valuables, looked grimly at Banks.

"Now, you rascal, we'll talk things over," he said. "We came here to talk to you, Banks, not to act the part of amateur detectives. It seems that we came in at a jolly lucky moment; we've got the whip hand of you now!"

"What do you want, young gents?" whined Banks. "Money?"

"No, you hound! We've come to talk to you about Crooke. You hold I O U's of his, and are threatening to expose him at St. Jim's. Well, let's make a bargain, Banks. We have only to go to the police and tell them where we found these things, and you'd get into pretty hot water, I'm thinking. So we are in a position to dictate. We're out to clear Crooke and make things all right for him at St. Jim's. To do that we'll be willing to stretch a point in your favour—if you do as we ask. Hand me those I O U's of Crooke's and keep your mouth shut about him, and we'll keep mum about where we got hold of these things."

Banks' shifty eyes glittered.

"You'll hand me back the sparklers, young gent?" he asked.

"Not much!" retorted Tom. "We'll see that the police get them back, but we'll do it secretly. Do you agree to the bargain?"

"Yes, hang you!"

Banks was cowed. The eight juniors meant business, he could see. He handed Tom the I O U's, which the Shell captain pocketed with a laugh of satisfaction.

"Thanks!" he said. "Remember, Banks, if you make any trouble at St. Jim's we'll tell the police all we know!"

Banks fumed and raged.

The Terrible Three, Jack Blake & Co. and Julian left, Tom Merry carrying the jewels. These he placed behind a bush on the towing-path by the Rhyl, Blake having sighted P.-c. Crump in the offing.

The village constable rolled up, and the St. Jim's juniors raised their caps respectfully.

"Ho!" said P.-c. Crump, with a glare—he was not exactly on terms of friendship with the St. Jim's boys. "Wat' fresh mischief is you young rips up to?"

"Please, Mr. Crump, we believe that there's something hidden behind this bush," said Monty Lowther. "Do look!"

P.-c. Crump looked. He picked up the packet of jewels, and his eyes opened wide.

"Ho!" said P.-c. Crump in a gasping voice. "Ho! The stolen jools! My heye!"

"Dear me! How clever of you, Mr. Crump!" said Tom Merry. "Don't lose them, will you? Kids, we shall have to be getting back to dinner!"

"Hear, hear!"

The juniors hurried back to St. Jim's.

Gerald Crooke was waiting at the gates. His looks and demeanour plainly showed his anxiety.

"Well?" he asked eagerly. "What did Banks say?"

"Everything's settled!" said Tom. "You have nothing to fear, Crooke. Here are your I O U's!"

Crooke took them like one in a dream. He could scarcely realise his good fortune.

Tom then explained, and Crooke listened in growing relief.

He drew a deep breath when Tom had finished.

"Oh!" he muttered. "So I am free, from that rascal, after all! I—I don't know how to thank you fellows—"

"We don't want thanks!" said Tom quietly. "Try to be decent in the future, Crooke—that's all."

Dinner bell rang, and the juniors went indoors.

There were two radiantly happy fellows at St. Jim's that day. With the clouds rolled away from their lives Gerald Crooke and Dick Julian could afford to be happy. No longer was Julian looked down upon and shunned. The juniors showed him in many ways that they were sorry and anxious to atone for the wrongs they had inflicted on him.

A few days later the result of the Grafton was announced. Dick Julian, in spite of all, had come out top with flying colours. And, to make his happiness further complete, he received a letter from his father that day, telling him that the runaway partner had been caught, and that affairs were now on the mend.

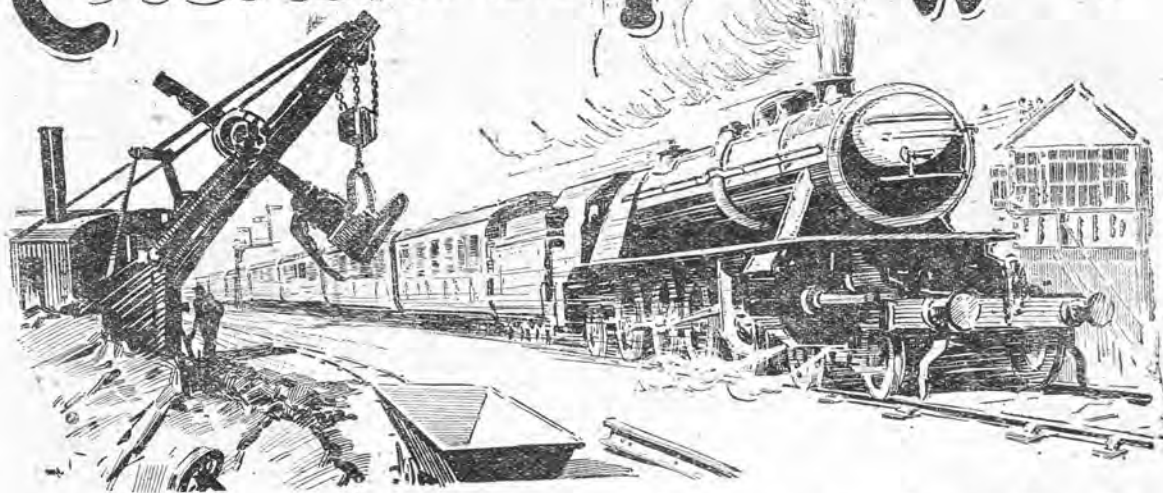
THE END.

(Don't miss next week's powerful double-length story of Tom Merry & Co.: "THE FOOL OF THE FORM!" By Martin Clifford.)

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 872.

Why had Soper and Cridland—both working, as Jimmy Speed knew, for Langrish and the Great Electric Northern against the Great Scottish and Central Railway—met in the lonely ruins of Black Hill? Read this thrilling and exciting instalment of—

CHUMS OF THE IRON WAY!



A Thrilling Yarn of Exciting Adventure on the Railroad.
By ROLAND SPENCER and FRANCIS WARWICK.

WHAT HAS HAPPENED.

JIMMY SPEED, a plucky and cheery young newsboy of Blackhampton.

SIR RICHARD GRANT, chief director of the Great Scottish and Central Railway, who has in his employ nearly all the male population of Blackhampton.

JOHN LANGRISH—whose heavy and determined features, square-set jaw, and steely eyes earn for him the title of "Granite" Langrish—chief director of the Great Electric Northern, and a rival of Sir Richard Grant.

HAROLD SOPER, a foreman shunter on the G.S.C., and an unscrupulous rascal, working in the pay of John Langrish, and

SAM BLUNDELL, a fireman on the G.S.C., and as true as steel.

It was a lucky day for the cheery young newsboy, Jimmy Speed, when, at great risk to himself, he rescued Sir Richard Grant from being crushed beneath the wheels of a monster goods-train engine, for it meant the realisation of his long-cherished ambition—to get a job in the great workshop of the G.S.C. To hear the clanging and the shouting, and to see the great steel locomotives towering around him, sent a thrill through Jimmy Speed.

But he is soon up against it when he meets Soper, who, in the pay of Granite Langrish, is endeavouring to poison his fellow-workers against the G.S.C.

He finds a friend, however, in Sam Blundell, a fireman. Then, anxious to learn more, he shadows Soper, who, together with another confederate of Granite Langrish's, have met in the lonely ruins of Black Hill to discuss further villainous plans.

(Note read on.)

In the Tunnel Mouth!

CAUTIOUSLY Jimmy peered round the broken edge of masonry. Soper and Cridland could be seen moving against a white, moon-splashed wall twenty yards away. Then they vanished through a low doorway into a well of darkness beyond.

Why had these men—both working, as Jimmy knew, for Langrish and the Great Electric Northern against the G.S.C.—met here in the lonely ruins of Black Hill? That was another question that bewildered Jimmy as he slipped noiselessly through the great, crumbling arch in pursuit of the two rogues.

Like a shadow the youngster slid along the moonlit wall, his heart in his mouth lest the pair should reappear and see him before he had time to slip back to hiding.

But he reached in safety the doorway through which they had vanished, and crouched in a dark recess by the black opening. He listened. No sound came to him through that mysterious doorway—only the whisper of the night wind stirring through the moonlit ruins of the old abbey.

Jimmy felt safe enough in his hiding-place, and determined to wait there till the two reappeared.

"I don't know what their game is, but I'll bet my boots they're up to no good!" Jim told himself grimly. "If there's anything to be found out, James, it's up to you to find it out!"

Slowly the minutes passed. He could hear nothing of Soper and Cridland, and the moon in rising threatened soon to illuminate the recess in which he crouched.

At last, very puzzled, Jimmy decided on a daring venture. He rose to his feet, and, darting noiselessly into the open, slipped through the low doorway beneath, which the two rogues had passed a quarter of an hour ago.

He crouched inside without a sound for some moments, then, his instinct told him, somehow, that no one was there. His eyes were growing used to the darkness, and, by the faint reflection of moonlight from outside, he soon saw that the big stone chamber was empty. But in the farther corner was another low opening.

Though he realised the terrific risk he was taking, Jimmy, his heart beating fast, determined to explore farther.

A stone stair led down from this second archway, and there was another bare stone chamber below, lighted by a gleam of moonlight that filtered down through a crack in the outer masonry. Jimmy stared round incredulously.

For of Soper and Cridland there was no sign!

Though Jimmy knew they had not come out again through the doorway above, these underground rooms of the old ruin into which they must have passed were empty. It was as though the two men had been spirited away—had melted into thin air!

But it was nearly an hour later before Jimmy returned to his motor-bike. He had spent that time searching through the ruins, but of Soper and Cridland there had been no sign. Their mysterious disappearance was complete.

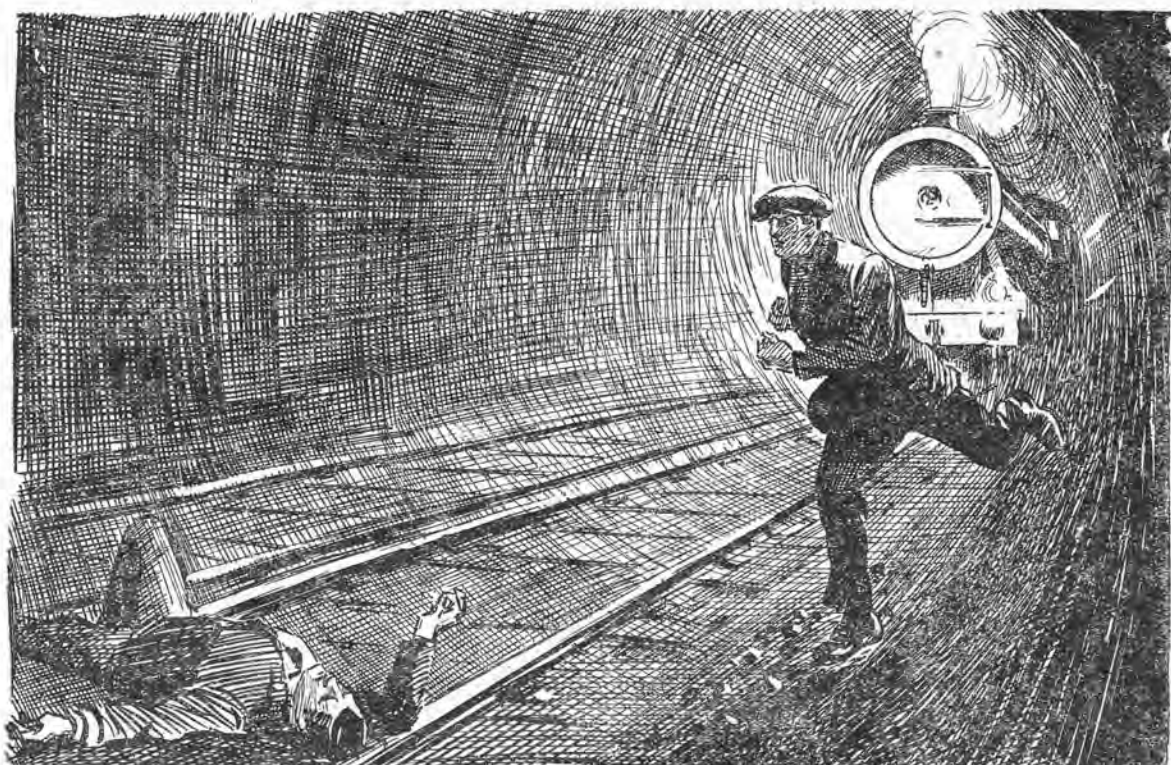
But for all that, Jimmy free-wheeled as far as he could down the long, sloping road before lighting his lamp. Then he started up the engine, and it was not long, at the break-neck rate he drove, before he had run the bike into the garage a few doors from home, where Sam kept his motorcycle.

He ran up the stairs to their room and burst in. Sam, a pair of compasses in his hand, looked up, with tired eyes and a furrowed brow.

"Hallo, kid! Back at last? How did the grid go? What's the time? Good heavens, I'd no idea I'd been working all this time. It's nearly midnight!"

Jim sat down, panting. Without waiting to regain his

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No time for thought! Sam Blundell leapt out on to the line and raced like a madman to the still form of Jimmy Speed. His eyes were riveted on the white face, dimly seen, of his chum, but through the corner of his eyes he could see the crimson glow from the firebox of the fast approaching express.

breath, he plunged into his story. Sam listened with increasing amazement.

"Vanished off the face of the earth!" concluded Jimmy excitedly. "Might have been a couple of bloomin' ghosts! I waited in the ruins for an age, but they never showed up again, and so at last I came away. An' here I am!"

"Queer!" muttered the young fireman, staring hard at Jimmy. "You're sure of all this?"

"As sure as I'm here!"

"It's mighty queer!" Sam rose to his feet, and paced up and down. "But queerer still is what you overheard about Langrish! What in thunder can that mean? Who on earth is Langrish, then? There's some skeleton in that man's cupboard, evidently, of which Cridland knows. If only we could find out what it is!"

"We jolly well must find out!" said Jimmy grimly. "By the way, how's the work going?"

"Not too well, old son. I've been working on the super-heater—struck a snag. A bad snag—something that hadn't occurred to me before, somehow, but upsets things rather rottenly. I hope to get round it in time, mind you; but the point is, what with expansion of metals— But I won't trouble you with the details. It's your night's work that's worrying me now. Let's have a bite to eat. Over grub we can talk this run business out."

Sam packed up his drawings, while Jimmy got busy with their rather belated supper. Over the meal they talked. In the end, at Sam's suggestion, it was decided to visit Black Hill Ruins on the following night together—"just to see what we shall see," as Sam remarked.

Then at last they turned in.

Jimmy was pretty sleepy during that Monday morning's work. But excitement kept them on the alert as the time drew nearer for the chums' visit to the ruins on Black Hill.

But Sam and Jim were not to reach the ruins that night.

The pair had decided to walk, since they would have been forced to keep more or less to the roads if they went by motor-cycle. Dusk was setting in as they left the edge of the town. As they hurried along the road that passed the southern end of Blackhampton Long Tunnel, Sam suddenly gripped Jim's shoulder, and stopped dead.

"Look!"

Jim swung round, staring down into the cutting, following the direction of Sam's startled eyes. Through the gathering dusk he was just in time to see a dark figure slip into the tunnel mouth.

"He was nipping down the side of the cutting when I

spotted him!" muttered Sam excitedly. "What's this mean? It's some more of Langrish's dirty work—"

"Sure it's not just some railwayman on his job?" suggested Jim, a little doubtfully.

Sam laughed grimly.

"I fancy not. Anyway, I mean thundering well to find out!"

He jumped for the wall, and was over in a moment, Jimmy close behind. The two scrambled down the steep side of the cutting, almost at the point where Jimmy had slithered down after the unconscious form of Sir Richard Grant nearly two weeks ago. As they did so the home signal close by fell with a crash.

A minute later the two chums had slipped into the vast, arching blackness of the tunnel-mouth.

Blackhampton Long Tunnel was over a mile in length—by far the longest tunnel on the G. S. C. Absolutely straight, far away in the distance the chums could see a tiny pin-point of light—the northern tunnel, where was the "North" signal cabin, sometimes called Lagthorpe Junction Box.

They came to a halt in the darkness, listening. Jim drew a quick breath as he heard hurrying footsteps ahead of them. Then the footsteps ceased suddenly.

"He's spotted us!" muttered Sam. "Come on!"

Without any attempt at concealment he raced away into the blackness.

Jim broke into a run, too. All the while he was straining his ears for a sound of their quarry, but to his surprise he heard nothing. Was the man, whoever he was, waiting for them to come up with him? At any rate, Jim was sure that no further footsteps, other than their own, were to be heard.

On they ran, peering eagerly ahead. At last Sam came to a sudden standstill, bewildered.

"Where in the blazes has he got to?" he muttered. "We're past where he stopped. There's no sight or sound of him!"

"I'm certain he didn't run on ahead!" gasped Jimmy. "We've gone past him. The beggar must have hidden in one of the shelter-holes! Perhaps he's nipping back—"

He swung round instantly at the thought. But no figure was outlined against the tunnel-mouth, some way off now. And there would certainly have been no time for the man to have got clear yet. Utterly at a loss, Sam Blundell and Jim stared at one another in the gloom.

"He's in one of the shelter-holes, then," said Sam, in a low voice. "Come on! We'll root him out in quick time!"

But the search proved fruitless. The mysterious figure had vanished into thin air.

"Hang it! Langrish's men—if he's one of 'em—seem to have the power to make 'emself invisible!" said Jimmy savagely, as he and Sam came to a halt, back once more at the point from which they had started their search. "Here's another mystery! Blowed if I know what to make of this! We—Hullo, look out, Sam, here's the train!"

Sam glanced up the line. The fast goods train that had been signalled as they entered the tunnel could be seen roaring for the tunnel-mouth. The panting billows of smoke flattened suddenly as the big eight-coupled locomotive entered with thunderous sound.

Sam swung round to his left and darted for a shelter-hole. He was surprised to find that Jimmy was not with him when he reached it; but Jimmy had at the same moment swung to the right, making for the next recess up the line.

Sam glanced along. The next instant a cry of amazed horror broke from him.

For, lying across the rails, in the path of the on-rushing train, he could make out in the dim gloom the motionless form of his chum.

The Mystery of the Tunnel!

HOW Jim came to be lying there Sam Blundell had scarcely time to wonder. No time for thought. He leapt out on to the line and raced like a madman towards that still form.

— Could he be in time? That was the ferrible question that hammered in Sam's brain. His flying feet caught in a sleeper, and he staggered, and all but fell. His eyes were riveted on the white face, dimly seen, of his chum. But through the corner of his eyes he could see the crimson glow from the locomotive's firebox dancing on the walls of the tunnel, nearer and nearer, as the great goods engine came on with its deep-throated, panting roar echoing down the tunnel.

Jim Speed's eyes flickered open. He wondered vaguely where he was. All he could see was a vast darkness, with that crimson glow dancing against the black not far away. A sound like thunder was in his ears; he could feel that the broad bar of metal which stretched uncomfortably beneath his shoulders was quivering and shaking queerly, and then strong arms seized him, lifting him, swinging him sideways.

The locomotive, belching smoke and steam, swept by, followed by the long line of covered goods-wagons. The red rear light of the guard's van twinkled away into the distance as the train raced for the far-off tunnel-mouth.

"Old man—old man—"

Sam's voice broke. Jimmy, realising all in a flash of understanding, gave a little, shaky laugh.

"Who-what happened?" he asked vaguely. "I—I— Yes, I felt a knock on the back of the head, Sam—someone struck me down from behind—then I fell!"

"Someone struck you from behind!" cried Sam incredulously. "But there's no one here! You must have fallen somehow, and banged your head on the rail."

Jimmy, with Sam's strong arm round his shoulders, struggled up, still a little dizzy, his hand to his head.

"I was hit from behind!" he repeated doggedly. "Look here, there's some mystery about this rotten tunnel! A minute ago that fellow Cridland vanished into nothing, and now I get hit on the napper when there's no one near me. Is this tunnel haunted, or what? If so, the spooks don't seem to like me. But for you, Sam, I'd have been so much catspawed by now—"

Jimmy did not finish. A cry leapt to the youngster's lips to see Sam Blundell borne backwards, struggling fiercely with something or someone unseen. The next moment Jimmy, too, felt two hands grip his throat. With a choking cry he was dragged backwards helplessly.

It was all like some horrible dream. Struggling in the darkness with his mysterious assailant, Jimmy could hear Sam gasping fiercely, could hear trampling feet between the rails as Sam fought in the gloom. Then, with a terrible crash, Jimmy fell to the sleepers, his arms twining round a man's burly form. But, in falling, the wiry youngster managed to twist uppermost.

He felt hot breath on his face, heard the air whistle between the man's locked teeth, felt cold, soft fingers claw up at him. In the dim light from the tunnel-mouth he could see a white face staring upwards into his own, his eyes glimmering with a strange light.

"Soper!"

The name broke from Jimmy in sheer amazement. He had recognised the man with whom he fought!

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Soper, fat and ill-conditioned though he was, had a fair share of strength. Jimmy's head was still aching from the blow he had received when struck down in the path of the oncoming train. The youngster felt sick and weak, while a confused whirl of thoughts dazed his mind. How came Soper to be here in the tunnel—the tunnel that had been empty of all but themselves a moment ago? It was like black magic!

Soper struck up at him, knocking his head back, and, with a great heave and a wrench from the man underneath, Jimmy felt himself flung aside. On his knees between the rails, struggling to rise, the youngster felt another savage blow in the face. He was knocked full length. When, a moment later, he had sprung to his feet, fists and teeth clenched, Soper had disappeared!

But where?

That was the amazing thing! They were much too far from the mouth of the tunnel for the man to have escaped that way. But that he had gone, Jimmy was sure. Behind him he could hear Sam still struggling with the second man. Perhaps—

Jimmy turned and sprang to Sam's help. But the man with whom Sam struggled was Cridland—of Soper there was still no sign. The man had vanished in an utterly amazing way.

Cridland was a tall, strong man, lean and wiry. In the deep gloom, Jim could just make out the thin, thick-lipped face, the black eyes flashing savagely. An ugly snarl was on Cridland's face. Strong though he was, the man knew that he had met more than his match in Sam Blundell.

Sam's fist flashed out, but Cridland sprang aside just in time, and leaping forward, grappled fiercely. Together the two swayed and struggled. Then, realising that he could not get the better of his antagonist, Cridland fought free again, turned, and sprang away. Sam leapt after him, with Jimmy only a yard behind Sam. A moment later the three were racing down the faintly gleaming rails into the pitch blackness beyond—pursuers and pursued.

And at that moment a distant, shrill whistle came echoing down the long tunnel. Still a mile away, another train was coming—an up passenger train had plunged into the northern mouth of Blackhampton Long Tunnel.

There was an eerie horror about this nightmare chase. On and on, farther and farther into the all-engulfing darkness they raced. Cridland had long been swallowed from their sight—his footsteps alone guided them; it was like pursuing the ghostly footsteps of some spectre of the dark!

The air grew damp and foul. Behind them, the arc of dim grey that was the tunnel-mouth grew smaller and smaller, while the pin-point of light ahead had been blotted out by the train that was echoing nearer and nearer to them.

The glow from its firebox could be seen, behind it the yellow light streaming from the windows of the carriages. The noise of it, echoing deafeningly around them, soon drowned the sound of Cridland's flying footsteps. Then the train was passing them on the other line; and again they saw Cridland.

Sam and Jim had paused for a moment as the locomotive pounded by. But when the tall, lean shape of the man ahead was revealed by the yellow glare from the lighted carriages, again they broke into a run, unheeding the train on the up-line. And at that instant Cridland, glancing back, saw them close on his heels.

He raced on, hesitated, swung round, and there came a hoarse shout from Sam Blundell.

Cridland, turning, had run back towards them beside the moving train. With a magnificent leap he sprang up on to the high footboard, hands clawing for the brass holds. A few moments later he was carried swiftly past them, crouching low on the footboard, and they could see his face, triumphant and mocking, staring down at them. They heard a harsh laugh borne back to them above the noise of the train.

It was almost past now. Sam Blundell, his voice savage with chagrin, cried in Jimmy's ear:

"He's gone! He's got away, Jim—"

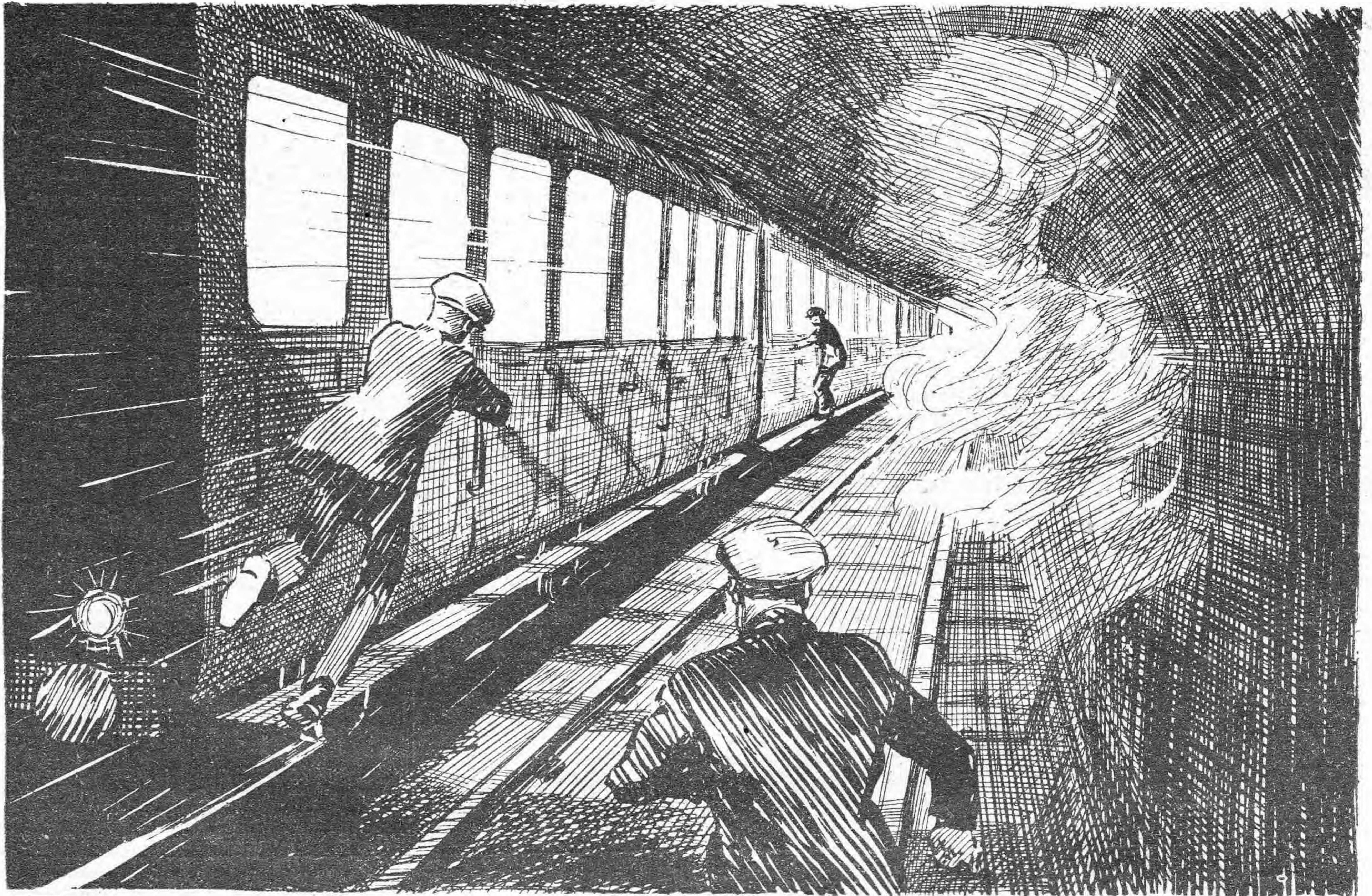
A sudden wild plan flashed into Jimmy's mind. Cridland should not diddle them if he could help it! What Cridland could do, he himself could!

"Got away? Don't you believe it, Sam!" cried Jimmy Speed with fierce determination.

All his dogged pluck was uppermost now. Turning, he raced along beside the train. The last carriage but one was passing as he made his spring.

He heard a shout from Sam Blundell, drowned in the echoing roar of the train.

The next moment, the icy wind tearing at his hair and clothes as though striving to drag him from his hold, Jimmy was clinging desperately to the footboard of the train that had on board Cridland, the man who knew Langrish's secret, as it thundered on through the blackness of the tunnel.



"Got away!" cried Jimmy Speed with fierce determination. "Don't you believe it, Sam!" With the spring of a tiger Jim jumped aboard the passing train. The next moment, the icy wind tearing at his hands and clothes as though striving to drag him from his hold, Jimmy was clinging desperately on the footboard of the last carriage but one, hard on the track of Cridland!

On the Bridge's Lip.

DESPITE the rushing, tearing wind which seemed intent on dragging Jimmy from his hold on the coach of that passenger train, the plucky youngster dragged his way forward along the footboards towards where he knew Cridland to be.

His brain seemed to be in a whirl for the moment, preventing him from reasoning things out calmly. What did he intend to do on finding Cridland? The question did not present itself just then. All he knew was that he must pull himself on—on towards where Cridland was either clinging to the outside of a coach, or had disappeared into a compartment.

The blackness of the tunnel began to turn to grey, and, with a sudden gasp, Jim realised that he must get out of sight before the train should rush out into daylight.

With another mad shriek from its whistle the great locomotive roared towards the tunnel mouth, and Jimmy looked anxiously into the compartment opposite to which he then was.

Luckily it was empty—a "third"—so Jimmy tore open the door and scrambled inside just as that part of the train rushed into daylight. The intensified clatter of the train's rush out of the tunnel entrance was in the boy's ears as he banged the door shut after him. Then he sank down on a seat, panting, and watched the sides of the cutting rush by as the train roared on its journey.

Had Cridland seen him? Or had he scrambled into the compartment out of sight just in time? Jimmy felt that his entry into the train had been unobserved; but it was as well not to be too sure. Experience had taught Jim Speed that.

"Gosh, that was exciting!" said Jim to himself, as he looked at the reddening sky through the right-hand window. "Lemme see. This train stops at Reddingford, but I doubt if that thick-lipped blighter will go as far as that. Of course, he may, but I wouldn't mind betting my Sunday hat that he'll slip out at the permanent-way check just after the train has crossed the Carn. Ticketless passengers are always looked at with suspicion nowadays. And I'm in the same boat as our thick-lipped friend Cridland. However, I must just await developments with becoming dignity and calm."

Jim grinned to himself as he watched the evening countryside flying past—an ever-changing panorama. It was joy for Jimmy, for a journey by train was something which had been

denied to him during his old life as newsboy, except, perhaps, an occasional sixpenny trip, which he used to take as a special treat sometimes. But that was only in a slow "local." Now he was travelling in a fast passenger train, watching the farms, fences, copses, fields, roads, rivers, bridges, etc., rush by swiftly.

But Jimmy could not appreciate that ride to the full, with the knowledge that he had serious work to do—the shadowing of Cridland, to try to discover if any further dirty work was on hand, like the attempted wrecking of the passenger express at Blackhampton Long Tunnel North Box, at Lagthorpe Junction. Also, there was the mystery surrounding John Langrish, the chief of the Great Electric Northern Railway, whose hand it was which prompted Cridland and his like to attempt their dastardly deeds.

"Granite Langrish!" muttered Jimmy bitterly, as he gazed out in the twilight over a shallow valley dotted with farmsteads, coppices, a silver-winding brook. "Granite Langrish, just because he's a millionaire and head of a great new railway, is not considered capable of such villainy. A navvy on the line will do desperate things—just for revenge, etc. But the chief director of a great railway. Oh, no! Not half he won't, as Sam and I know! Well, we've an uphill fight, Sam and me. But we'll watch 'em all, and see what we can do ourselves, if we can't drag the law into it. Sir Richard Grant's horror of any sort of publicity feeds me right up to the neck! But he knows his own business, I guess. Hallo, Muchlock's off against us. No, it isn't, though. Down it goes."

The arm of Muchlock signal went down even as Jimmy spoke, and the winking blood-red point became emerald green. For darkness was closing in rapidly now.

In spite of his troubles, Jimmy found himself taking a keen interest in the run, particularly the signals, for he knew a good deal about the railroad, though he had seldom been able to travel on it.

On rushed the train, shrieking under bridges, roaring through level crossings, clattering over brooks and roads, howling furiously in cuttings, and clattering like a mad thing through short tunnels.

Jimmy kept his eyes ahead, though he took care not to put his head out of the window till it was quite dark. He saw Renbrook distant give the train the road, then down went the home signal. On they rushed into the night, and Jimmy now leaned slightly out of the window. The green of the platform starter at the little country station showed

that the line was clear. It came in a flash, was gone, followed by a clatter and a roar, and groups of indistinct figures standing on the platform, for all the world like a "still" picture in that instantaneous view. That was all Jimmy saw of Renbrook Station.

Clewthorpe home signal gave them the next block clear, the green light shining reassuringly. But the distant above was up, the point of light red as bright blood on polished silver, unwinking, a clear warning to the driver of the train.

The train began to slow down in pace, for Jim knew that the driver was allowed to pass distant signals at "danger," while the home signals must be obeyed implicitly. So a sharp look-out was kept for the signal from the next block, and hands were to brakes and on the regulator in the cab of the locomotive.

The check in the permanent way, where the work was in progress, was not now far ahead. Jim could see the winking lights of the town of Carnchester—nearly thirty miles down the River Carn from Carnborough—well ahead. All his thoughts came back to Cridland and the grim work that was ahead of him. He must now watch carefully on the left-hand side of the train, for the workmen on the line would move clear to the right, and it would not pay Cridland to leap out into the middle of them.

The great iron bridge over the canal at Carnchester drew near. Jim already saw the spider's web of girders farther along the line. It was a high bridge, as Jim knew, and passed over, not only the canal and the river, but a couple of wide streets of the town and another railway, which passed under diagonally.

"Well, we'll see the lights on the line where the check is soon, I expect. That distant ahead is against us, and we'll be down slower before we get over the bridge."

Jim muttered to himself as he watched intently for any sign of the opening of a compartment door and the exit of a man. However, he could not expect that yet.

Then, suddenly, with a swift cry of alarm, Jim reeled back

into the interior of the compartment, for the door was whisked suddenly open, as if to precipitate him out into the keen night air. But the lad had been careful enough to keep his hands on the door-jamb, so he was able to leap backwards.

Then, through the blackness of the doorway appeared a face—a thin, thick-lipped face, with evil black eyes glinting dangerously—the face of Cridland.

The man was scrambling into the compartment, and thought and action were simultaneous with Jimmy at that moment.

That man must never gain his feet inside the compartment! Tall and strong and wiry as the man was, Jimmy knew that, on equal terms, he himself would be lost. He must keep him outside—defend the compartment.

With that thought in mind, Jim, his eyes flashing and mouth set in a determined line, leapt straight at Cridland with the idea of pushing him back on to the footboard, and making him keep his distance by defending the door with his hands, feet—anything. Cridland must be kept outside.

Jim's hands, held low, flashed towards Cridland's throat. But the man snarled and jabbed upwards with his fist. Jim caught the man's wrist and held tight. But Cridland simply, by this means, dragged Jimmy down towards him. Then the brute's great, strong fingers were on the lad's throat, and he felt himself scraping along the floor of the compartment, out on to the footboard.

And the train was just at that moment beginning to clatter out over the great iron bridge, only a foot to spare between the rail and the girdered sides.

Jim gasped, but his fingers gripped cloth, and he clung on desperately.

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